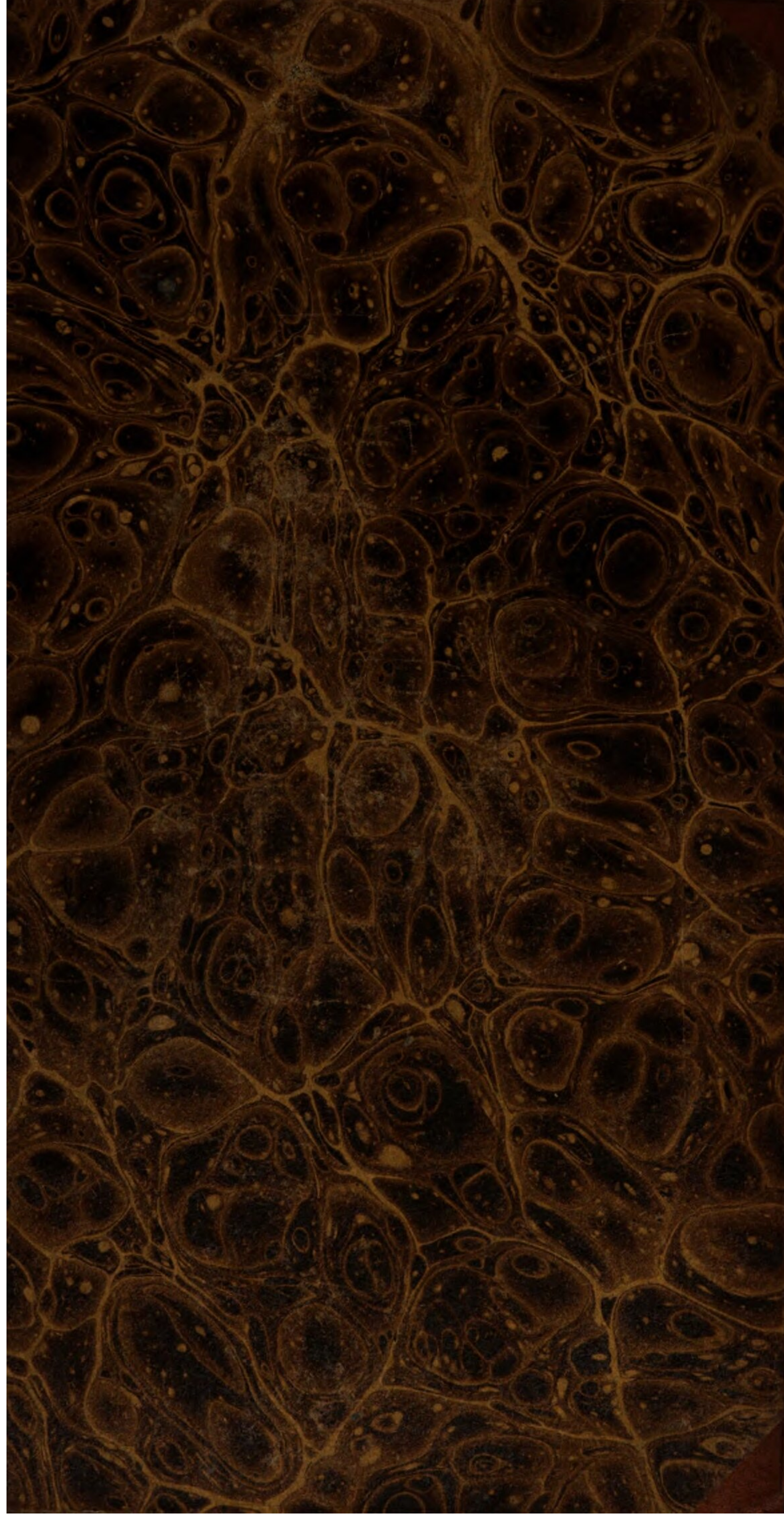
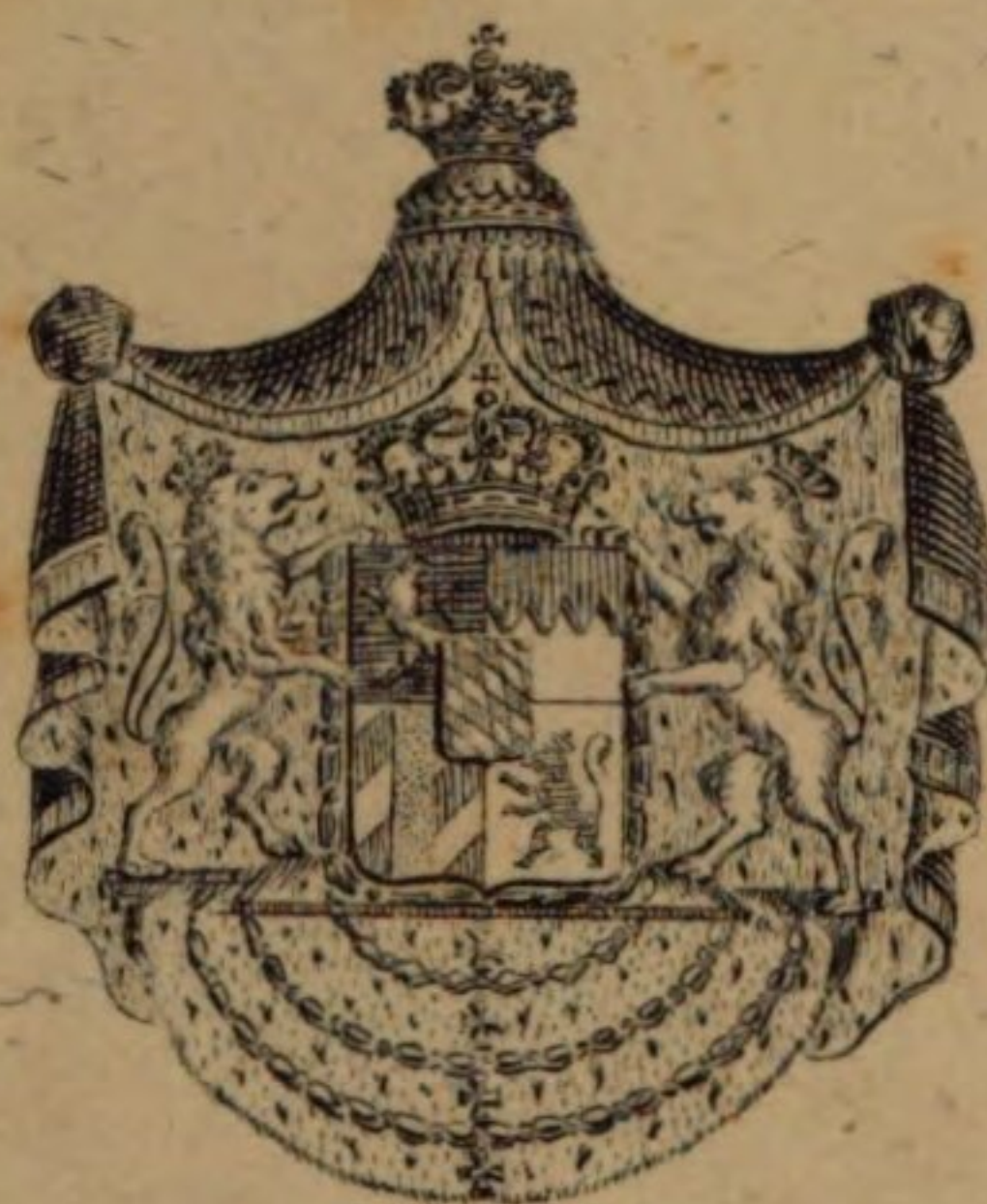




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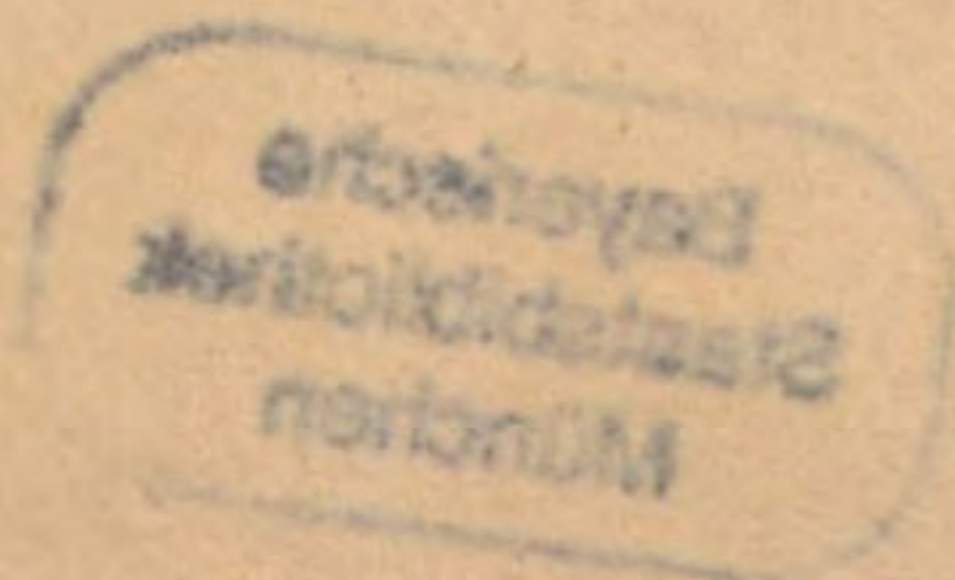
COMPRISING
WORKS

BY THE
**MOST POPULAR AND FASHIONABLE WRITERS
OF THE PRESENT DAY.**

IN FIFTY VOLUMES.

VOL. XXXIX.

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THE
NEW BRITISH NOVELIST

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EDITED BY

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NEW BRITISH NOVELIST

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ALICE PAULET:

A SEQUEL TO

“SYDENHAM.”

CHAPTER I.

To find myself in the carriage, rolling over the road to London, always afforded me, at least, for the time being, an agreeable excitement; but in my present state of mind, when my hopes of private happiness had been blighted, and retirement subjected me to painful reflection, I felt my spirits peculiarly elated as I approached that great world, where I should have ample opportunities of escaping from the persecutions of thought, and where every temptation of ambition and pleasure would court my indulgence.

“Yes,” said I, internally, “I will let her see how little I think about her. She shall

understand that my thoughts are occupied by higher objects : I will cultivate ambition, and make the most of those talents with which I am endowed. The House of Commons shall hear my voice ; I will turn patriot—I can afford it : I am satisfied with the degree of rank and wealth which I possess, and I shall seek power and place, that I may, when they are offered to me, nobly refuse them ! How will her vanity be piqued, when she hears my praises sounded ! and how gratifying will it be to me, when I meet her in society, to show by the cordiality and frankness of my manner that I considered her no more than a friend, nor suspected her of having entertained any design of inspiring me with a tenderer sentiment !”

On the day of my arrival in town I dined with the Palmers. These valued friends, who were always the same, in town or country, received me with affectionate warmth, which I returned with peculiar emphasis ; regarding them, at the time, as my only real and disinterested friends ; for the conduct of Alice had

contaminated my sentiments with respect to Paulet himself and Lady Jane, although I had no reason to believe that they were parties to the scheme of double-dealing and coquetry, which their sister had practised.

“ We have asked nobody to meet you,” said Lady Eleanor, “ as we wished to have you to ourselves the first day.”

“ And what have you been doing all the summer and winter, Sydenham ?” said her husband ; “ Eleanor was in a terrible fright that you were going to marry one of the Havilands.”

“ Yes, indeed I was,” answered Lady Eleanor ; “ for they are an intriguing, frivolous family ; mere people of the world, with whom I should be sorry to see any friend of mine connected. And you—I am sure, were equally alarmed, lest they should convert him to Toryism.”

“ Why, I did not know but that the bright eyes of the young lady and the seductive offers of Lord Tewkesbury’s agents, might be too much for your virtue ; I know they were very

anxious to get you upon any terms, and having failed in both speculations, they abuse you pretty handsomely."

"That I can easily conceive; but what do they say of me?"

"I'm sure you don't care what they say," observed Lady Eleanor.

"True; and that's the very reason I want to know, for the schoolboy's reason—fun."

"Tell him, Eleanor, what Lady Daventry said of him the other day."

"Oh, somebody was mentioning your name the other day at a dinner where we met, and she only observed, in her drawling manner, 'Oh, that very ridiculous person, Sir Matthew Sydenham! what has become of him? I think he was a day or two at Betchingley, in the summer, but I've neither seen nor heard of him since.' Now you must not despise this retaliation, but take the will for the deed, for be assured she would be exceedingly severe upon you, if she could."

"The malice is willing, but the wit is weak."

“ Indeed, I must say that you deserve much severer retaliation than Lady Daventry can inflict ; I should be a traitress to my sex, if I was not indignant at your treatment of poor Lady Charlotte ; jilting her first, and laughing at her afterwards.”

“ As how, pray ?”

“ Indeed, it was too bad ; the remark which you made upon hearing of her elopement is in every body’s mouth—‘ Ah, poor girl, she has married her lover, out of pique at being disappointed in me !’ ”

“ I don’t recollect—”

“ Oh, don’t attempt to deny it ! your very smile is confession, even if the *mot* did not bear internal evidence of its authorship. No one else could have said such a thing.”

“ It was little Gaitskell who repeated it to us,” said Palmer ; “ he was with you when it dropped, and treasured it up ; and being one of Sheridan’s good-natured friends, has retailed it with great industry.”

“ Well, but now,” rejoined Lady Eleanor, “ to talk of another, and, an infinitely more

agreeable topic: what do you think of the Paulets?"

"A very delightful family. Paulet is a most superior person in every respect; Lady Jane a bewitching creature, full of malice, kindness, and innocence; and the sister, a very nice little girl."

"Oh, lame and impotent conclusion!" cried Lady Eleanor; "Alice, upon whom I expected your finest panegyric, to be last and least in your praise! And then, what an epithet—nice little girl! Why, if you had ingeniously endeavoured to choose the one which should be least applicable to her, I think you could hardly have been more successful. It gives me the idea of a description of person quite the reverse of Alice Paulet."

"Why, what would you have me say? I really like her very much; she is very pretty and amiable, in short—a very pleasing young person—will that satisfy you?"

"Oh no, there is something wanting yet—still some indescribable deficiency. The picture is cold and tame, unlike the glowing

sketches that you are accustomed to throw off."

"Ah, but they were not flattering ones; you see I don't excel in praise, my dear Lady Eleanor. If your heroine had but one fault—a single mole to contrast with her manifold beauties, she would be much more attractive; but, in fact, she is such a dull mass of perfection, that she deadens my genius."

"Come, now, I cannot suffer you to exercise your wit on my Alice—But, jesting apart, is she not a love?"

"She may be so to others," answered I, with a shrug; "but, upon mine honour, she is none to me."

"Well, you need not deny it so earnestly," said Lady Eleanor with a significant smile, which I observed with no satisfaction, "but give your malice and fastidiousness full scope, and then tell me whether there is any thing to object to her."

"Well, since you give me such liberal indulgence, I will take advantage of it, and extract a fault even from one of her virtues. It is admitted, you know, that one can have

too much of a good thing, and therefore I will acknowledge to you, that your divine Alice is a little too wise to please me."

"Is it possible to please you? If a woman talks nonsense, you call her a fool; and if she ventures upon rational conversation, you stigmatise her as wise! Where is the golden mean, I should like to know? I had thought and hoped that Alice Paulet would have exactly suited your taste."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you; so you wished to see me betrayed?"

"I certainly did hope you might be convinced, though against your will, that there was something amiable and estimable to be found in our sex; and let me tell you, that highly as you may value yourself, it would have been no humiliation to have bowed before the shrine of my divinity, as you call her. I know several who have offered themselves, but have been rejected; Lord Amer-sham only last year."

"And why didn't she accept him? Heir to a dukedom and boundless wealth, one of the first

matches in the country ; too much, I should think, for any virtue to resist."

" But she refused him, however, simply because she did not like him personally."

" Oh !"

" You may sneer, but it is the fact ; and this is not a solitary instance of her declining such offers for the same reason."

" Perhaps her affections are engaged," said I ; " indeed I rather suspect they are ; there's a young man in the country, whose father is their near neighbour, to whom she seemed very much attached, and he to her."

" You mean young Axford ?" answered Lady Eleanor ; " I have reason to believe—indeed I know the contrary ; she has a great regard for him, but no love whatever ; there may be on *his* side."

" Miss Paulet has told you so ?" inquired I anxiously.

" I will give you so much information,—she has. I questioned her upon the subject a short time since, for I had heard that they were very intimate, and she gave me to understand that she

never considered him in any other light than as a friend. Indeed, from what I have seen of the young man, I should say that he was not the sort of person to captivate Alice."

I was much pained and disgusted by this intelligence of Lady Eleanor's, which went to confirm my belief that I had been egregiously deceived in Miss Paulet. At the very time that Axford was kneeling at her feet and caressing her hand, she writes, it appears, to her friend, that she regards him with indifference!—So much for your demure and discreet young ladies!

CHAPTER II.

THE following morning Palmer breakfasted with me by appointment, to talk over political business. As it is not my purpose to weary the gracious reader with a repetition of the topic principally entertained in the third volume of these Memoirs, I shall not detail the particulars of the information communicated to me by my friend. It is sufficient to say, that his object was to form a party in opposition to the existing administration on public grounds, not adopting the watch-words of faction and repudiating its ends, but endeavouring by honesty, firmness, and talent, to establish a sympathy in the country. Lord Tewkesbury's Government had professed to combine the elements of all

parties, which being mixed in the cauldron of office were to produce, among other remedies, one panacea of such virtue that it was to cure all the ills with which the nation was afflicted. This universal medicine had been prescribed by almost every political quack for a century passed, and though it had destroyed every constitution upon which it had been tried, there will still be knaves to maintain, and fools to believe in its virtue ; I need, perhaps, hardly say that this panacea was RADICAL REFORM. As might have been expected from such practitioners, the real maladies under which the poor patient laboured, and which admitted of safe, obvious, and practicable remedies, were neglected. In fact, he was suffering from the constant operation of a drastic purge, which his late physicians had been lessening slowly, but surely ; but as this gradual course of treatment had been violently reprobated by his present advisers, he was taught to believe, that by calling them in, he should experience immediate relief. The new men, however, after having superseded their predecessors *on this very ground*, bring

forward their anxiously-expected prescription, after much preliminary parade, and behold, instead of being diminished, the aperient ingredients are positively multiplied. "At present," say they, "for reasons best known to ourselves, we do not deem it expedient to diminish your cathartics, but we have taken such order, that *at some future period* they may be lessened with safety." And this too, immediately after one of them had said, "Thank Heaven! the time is come when physicians can prescribe without apothecaries." Poor Mr. Bull, astonished, disappointed, and indignant, and beginning to suspect that these men were little better than impostors, was going to order them to be kicked out of the house; but their people got about him and persuaded the good man that he should die if he were to discard them; "But wait," said they, "for the grand panacea that will set you upon your legs again," and the poor man being in a very weak state, yielded to their importunities.

But to drop figures, and to speak in sober earnest. Heterogeneous as was the composi-

tion of this administration, in which Whigs, Liberals, Moderates, Radicals, and ultra-Tories, the representative of every grade of opinion, sat down cheek by jole at the same board, its acts clearly manifested the predominance of Whig councils. Such arrogance and ignorance, such effrontery and imbecility, were too characteristic of Whigs in office to be mistaken. Their proper province is opposition, where they may be in some measure useful as a drag-chain upon Government ; and it is likewise good that they should occasionally come into place for a short time, otherwise if they had no opportunities of practically refuting themselves, and proving their incapacity, the country might, by their clamour, be led to suspect that they were unjustly excluded from power.

Their proceedings in the present instance would have been ludicrous, were not state concerns of too serious consequence to be made a joke of. In performing none of their promises, they were consistent to themselves ; in adding to the burdens of the country, however, they exceeded the expectations of those who

knew them best, and who thought they would have made *only no alteration whatever*. As a means of getting into office, they had raised the cry of Reform, which they intended, of course, to abandon or evade as soon as it had procured for them what they wanted ; but when they found that it had, owing to the concurrence of particular circumstances, acquired a stronger hold upon the public mind than it is usual for such popular topics to possess, and that it was, in fact, the only expedient left to them by which they could retain their places, they employed every means of extending and confirming that clamour, not a sound of which had been heard six months before. Then they came forward with great parade to execute the irresistible will of the sovereign people, whose sweet voices had been raised but recently in the same manner against a measure of justice, liberality, and wisdom ; and a short time previously, almost to a pitch of insurrection, in favour of a convicted strumpet. What a crying shame, said these men, as wise as they were honest, that Old Sarum should have two

representatives and Manchester none ! How monstrous that money and the nomination of Peers should return Members to Parliament ! We will repair this deformity in the Constitution, we will do away with its immorality. It shall be symmetry without, and purity within. True, that the greatest statesmen have been introduced to public life by the nomination borough, but what argument is this to men who profess to be studious only of the exact and graceful proportions of the Constitution ? We are shocked, say these sticklers for political morality, that seats should be bought and sold ; we cannot suffer this abomination to exist any longer ; but, gentlemen, you are still free to give five and ten pound notes to the independent electors. Those are private arrangements of which we take no notice. Surely this reasoning is plagiarized from our ancient friend Dogberry.

But I must not trust myself farther on this topic, since in pursuing it thus far, I have abused my reader's indulgence, and violated my promise. *Quid ad rem ?* This may be

all very fine, and very wise, but what has it to do with the story? We are dying to know about the loves of Matthew Sydenham and Alice Paulet, and you give us a political pamphlet; this is indeed answering our expectations of bread with a stone. Patience, my fair readers, I beseech you, patience and you shall be satisfied. I have now, I am thankful to say, advanced into the last stage of my Memoirs, which I humbly trust afford sufficient evidence that their principal care has been to provide for your instruction and amusement. One volume, indeed, of this great work has been for the most part occupied by matters in which you can or ought to feel but little interest; for this self-indulgence, permit me to remind you I have endeavoured to atone, by devoting a whole volume to concerns in which you should find sympathy. Nature and experience, indeed, has not fitted me to record scenes of romantic passion, of delicate embarrassments, and elegant distresses, therefore, I fear that the volume which I have just concluded, may be to your taste dull and cold, and,

perhaps, it is unreasonable to expect that you should take an interest in so flat an affair as the growth of an attachment between a man of the world and a woman of sense. The mind of your humble admirer is of a sober, practical cast, and can give forth nothing with which it is not personally acquainted; unlike those fine writers who can draw from the fertility of their imaginations without any assistance from knowledge or truth.

CHAPTER III.

HAVING thus apologized to my fair patronesses, I trust I have obtained their gracious permission, in this concluding part, occasionally to diverge from the legitimate course of my narrative, into such topics as those with which the third volume of my Memoirs was conversant.

Against a Government of such materials and character, it was Palmer's object to establish a regular opposition ; and it was peculiarly consistent with his independence and high integrity to place himself in conspicuous hostility to the popular voice in defence of the right. Palmer, indeed, had never regularly belonged to the Whig corps, although, in common with many

other independent men, he had co-operated with them against the Duke of Launceston's administration, under the impression that its object was the curtailment of liberty ; a design which he was prepared to meet with as much resistance, as he was now about to offer to one of a different description ; being of opinion, that the degree of freedom at present enjoyed, was exactly suitable to the welfare of the people, and the spirit of the Constitution.

“ Their present measure,” said he, “ is but a repetition of the attempt made by Fox's India Bill ; they fancy that it will secure to them a permanent tenure of office. They are and must necessarily be supported by every disaffected and disreputable person of all shades in the country ; Atheists, Radicals, Democrats, and Adventurers, who hate our existing institutions, and who have every thing to gain, and nothing to lose by a change, hail it as a material step toward, if not the actual consummation of, their hopes and wishes. To these add the regular mob, who will always echo back the voices of their demagogues, together with many weak

but well-meaning persons, who have been carried away by the clamour, and you have what is called the voice of the country. Read the effusions of the orators at the public meetings, and you may judge of what quality they are. You will find their chief ingredients to be seditious gasconade, abuse of the aristocracy, vulgarity, and folly. For my own part, if force is the alternative, although I dread civil war as the greatest evil next to anarchy and military despotism, I would prefer taking up arms in defence of the constitution, to surrendering it at discretion."

To the alliance which Palmer proposed, I cordially acceded, and undertook to forward its views to the utmost of my humble ability.

"I hope you are case-hardened, Sydenham," said my friend, "for you must expect to be furiously attacked by the press as soon as you come forward."

"I care not for its bullying. No man respects the periodical press more than I do, or is more sincerely anxious that his public character should meet its approbation; but as for

the ruffianly abuse of certain vulgar, profligate prints, I despise it thoroughly. It is the duty of the journals to be the organs of public opinions, and not its directors, which they are now aspiring to be."

After naming to me the several members who had engaged to act with him, we discussed the plan of operations.

These arrangements made, I accompanied Palmer to the House. My return was welcomed in a very flattering manner by my old political associates, many of whom were much *changed* since I saw them last, although it was but nine months since. Those gentlemen who had been my worthy coadjutors when I belonged to the gang, but with whom I had broken, upon their deserting their colours, now that they had been dismissed by their new chief, greeted me with extreme cordiality, expressed their indignation at the deception which had been practised upon them, and, in fact, were furious oppositionists, animated equally by the love of office and the desire of revenge.

They were, however, sorely puzzled how to act. As the devil would have it, they were old reformers, and feeling it necessary to keep together some tattered shreds of consistency to hide their nakedness, they knew not how to reconcile their opposition to the vital measure of ministers with their former professions. Another set of men, who, when the danger was far off, had bullied and swaggered about reform, now that the enemy was at hand, and the drums were beating to arms, felt their hearts fail them, and slunk to the rear, to afford them a facility, if possible, of making their retreat altogether. A third troop of cowards and sneaks, though hating the cause in their hearts, were keenly watching the position of the two forces, resolved, if they found the reformers most powerful, to support them, either from physical fear, or to curry favour with their constituents. Lastly, there were the neck-or-nothing men, the tribe of worthless and ravenous dandies, whose political existence would be terminated, and their hopes of plunder cut off,

by the proposed measure. These are politically on a par with the low adventurers and profligate demagogues, whose hopes are in revolution, for their sphere of action is anarchy, except, indeed, (to give the devil his due,) that the former are not so actively mischievous as the last mentioned might be expected to prove.

My accession to the ranks of those who professed to support the integrity of the constitution, was not considered immaterial by either party. I had a high reputation as a rising man, and I do believe, if principle had not attached me to the opponents of the bill, I should have joined them, were it only to separate myself from "the young talent," a pack of shallow, flippant coxcombs, (with perhaps but one exception,) with whom I had a horror of being identified, and the chief of whom were conspicuous in support of the measure. May I be set down for a blockhead, rather than be confounded with the mob of "clever young men" of the present day, who scribble and spout without depth or compass — slight creatures,

who can perform showy feats of agility, but have none of the pith and sinew of the giants of old. The illustrious sage has said that money should not be collected in masses, but spread like manure. But it would seem that the reverse applies to talent. Be that as it may, however, it is certain that the solid bars of gold are now beaten into thin leaf.

CHAPTER IV.

IN the gossip which always attends any measure of importance, the different reports and assertions which are confidently made respecting its fate are amusing enough. "The bill," says one careful calculator in its favour, "will be carried by sixty-five."—"I know," says an oppositionist, with equally scrupulous accuracy, "that it will be thrown out by a majority of forty-two."—"There is to be no division," affirms a third.—"Shall you vote for the bill?" said I to a Tory country gentleman. "Why, I suppose I must," answered he; "they'll dissolve if it does not pass, and I can't afford to stand another election just now; besides, they say there'll be an insurrection in the country if

it is thrown out.”—“It ’ll never get through the Lords,” said one dandy *against*, to another *for* the measure. “I’ll bet you six to four—thousands,” was the conclusive argument in reply. In fact the bill was a very fertile source of gambling, and it was said that there was as much money upon it as upon the Derby.

In fact, at the time, this topic superseded every other. The spirit of politics forced its way even into drawing-rooms, and usurped the throne of fashion. Young men talked to their partners with much complacency of their prospects in the scramble which was to take place, and ladies spoke with alarm of the times, and the dreadful reform measure.

“Do you really think there will be a revolution?” inquired a very pretty woman of me, as of one from whom she expected authentic information.

“No doubt of it,” was my grave reply.

“But are you serious?”

“I am indeed.”

“And—and what will be the consequences?” rejoined the fair inquirer, who, having ascer-

tained that there was to be a revolution, now desired to know what a revolution was.

“The consequences,” answered I, “are too numerous to be detailed. I can only mention a few, which will be among the earliest. The Opera will certainly be put down by act of Parliament ; the patronesses of Almack’s will be dismissed, and their places filled up by tradesmen’s wives, so that, instead of waltzing with guardsmen, you will be obliged to content yourself with apprentices, if, indeed, you are so fortunate as to get a subscription. So I advise you to make interest betimes in the proper quarters.”

“I am sure, then, I hope the odious bill will be thrown out,” said the lady, who, however, knowing my character, was not quite sure that I was not quizzing her.

This reminds me of a conversation which at this period I overheard in the street between two “unwashed artificers,” at the door of a house, where a petition in favour of the ministerial measure solicited their signatures.

“I say, Bill, cans’t thee write?”

“Ah, to be sure I can,” answered Bill.

“ Well, come in and write thy name to this here purtition for reform,” rejoined his companion.

“ Reform ! what the h—ll’s that ?”

“ Why doesn’t thee know ? Reform is that we shall be all lords and squires ; shouldn’t thee like to have thy mississ a lady, and to ride in a carriage, with nothing to do but eat and drink like a new one ?”

“ My eyes ! if that’s the meaning on’t,” said Bill, “ I’ll sign it fast enough,—if I don’t, I’m blowed !”

Accordingly, in they turned, and scrawled their names on the dirty parchment, which was subsequently presented, with previous notice, as the great London petition, signed by a hundred thousand inhabitants.

CHAPTER V.

DURING the first few days after my return to town, my time and thoughts were so wholly engrossed by politics, that I literally had not leisure to bestow a thought upon my private grievances. I rejoiced at this, for it afforded me hope that by suffering my attention to be interested by other matters, I might eventually recover myself, and think and look upon Miss Paulet with comparative indifference. But this I soon found to be a delusion; the arrival of the Paulets in town quickly recalled those feelings and contemplations which had only been temporarily suspended by absence, and the novel excitement of my political avocations. With these, however, I studiously professed

to be wholly occupied. I must not omit to mention, that the reception I met with from these intimate friends, was not exactly such as I could have expected. I cannot say, indeed, that there was any marked alteration in Paullet's manner, though it seemed scarcely so cordial as usual. In that of Lady Jane, however, there was something so cold and repulsive, that it was impossible to avoid taking notice of it: neither did Alice meet me with all the frankness and kindness to which I was accustomed, and which was due to one who might at least claim to be considered as a friend; but her manner was far less discouraging than that of Lady Jane. She did not look well, and seemed to be out of spirits, but upon my making the remark to Lady Jane, she answered abruptly that her sister was perfectly well, and in excellent spirits. "What should ail her, and why should she be out of spirits?" This tone precluded any farther pursuit of the subject, and, indeed, as it ran through her whole conversation, rendered my pretty friend, whose great charm was her liveliness and good

humour, so disagreeable, that I curtailed my visit.

I was rather puzzled to account for this change, for, if there was any offence on either side, surely it was I who had cause to find it in their conduct, and not they in mine; but, perhaps, knowing this, they acted upon the principle of the man who, when he was in the wrong, and expected a scolding, thought it best to be beforehand, by flying into a passion himself; unless, indeed, they were angry with me for having declined to afford Miss Paulet that triumph upon which she had, in all likelihood, certainly calculated. If so, there was abundant satisfaction to be derived from their cold looks and short sentences.

I wish I could have felt, upon the occasion, only that degree of concern which is caused by finding those whom one had been taught to regard as friends in the country, sink into mere cold acquaintances in town. I wish I could have experienced a pure sentiment of gratification at outwitting those who attempted to overreach me; but truth obliges me to acknow-

ledge, that though I endeavoured to entertain these emotions, I did not succeed, for I found that they could not take place in a mind affected like mine. The influence of pride—the only counteraction to the despotism of the other passion—was daily becoming weaker, and I felt myself beginning to regard the deceitful and heartless behaviour of Alice more in sorrow than in anger. Fain would I have attempted to shake the conviction relative to this point with which I had been impressed, but really it was impossible, after the conclusive testimony afforded by the scene in the shrubbery. Her pale cheek and depressed spirits were not for me, but for him who was absent.

To get rid of these reflections I walked down to the House. It was crowded, for the debate was upon the great question. A distinguished advocate for the measure, whose speech had been expected, was upon his legs. From the yelling and shouting which continually burst forth in fits of several seconds' duration, a stranger would imagine he was approaching a den of lunatics, instead of the chamber of the

“Collective Wisdom.” It was impossible to resist the contagion of the scene, and, forgetting Alice Paulet, I took my seat upon the floor, and added my voice to the cheers, which proceeded from the champions of the constitution.

CHAPTER VI.

I SOON found that I was still a favoured object by that fickle divinity, Fashion, who is more capricious than Nature herself, although I had never courted her smiles, and was now more indifferent to them than ever. In fact, in my connexion with this goddess, I had reversed the usual practice, for I exacted homage from, instead of rendering it to her, and treated her occasionally as Mr. Pitt did George the Third, with insolence and contempt, presuming upon a sense of my own importance.

From no motive of vanity, however, but solely from inclination, I now confined myself to the society of that coterie, known in the first volume of my memoirs, by the designa-

tion of "Mrs. Majendie's set," to attendance upon my parliamentary duties, and to political dinners. The circle of public men with whom I constantly associated, was much narrower than that in which I had moved on the preceding year. Sometimes, indeed, I yielded to the entreaties of that excellent fellow Lutwyche, and joined his parties, although he was quite out of my present set. The company of wits was, however, sadly diminished since last year. Singleton, its master spirit, was upon his death-bed, and Lord Robert Lindsay, another shining light, had been removed from this to another world; that is to say, he had been appointed to a colonial government. Political differences had rendered it unpleasant for others of the fraternity to meet at the same board; consequently, Dick's suppers were deplorably fallen off. Still this choice spirit was not discouraged, but gallantly kept together the remnant of his band of good fellows, which even now, bereft as they were of their former splendour, were not less than "th' excess of glory obscured."

These devotees of Momus and Bacchus com-

plained, in very complimentary terms, of my defection, to which they kindly attached more importance than I could believe it deserved; for to say the truth, I did not excel in that light ethereal wit which was in request among them. There never was such a set of laughing philosophers as these men. Midas-like, every thing they handled was turned into wit, and the comparison holds on, for the mind was in danger of starvation amid this profusion of wealth; it was all glitter. Though they were for the most part kind hearts, a person who did not know them, from hearing their conversation sometimes, would suppose that they were the most unfeeling creatures breathing. Nothing, however sad or serious, was exempted from their pleasantry. Even the death of Singleton himself, was turned into a subject of jesting, although there was not one of them, I am confident, who did not sincerely lament the loss of their old and gifted friend. I myself, whose acquaintance with him was of recent date, and who, as the reader has seen, thought him little better than an accomplished knave, could

not help feeling much affected when I heard that such a brilliant light had been snuffed out.

A few days after this event, I was present at a meeting of the Inimitable Livers (for so they called themselves, after a society of the same description, established by Antony and Cleopatra, and celebrated in Plutarch,) and the loss which they had sustained was naturally the first topic of conversation.

“Well, poor Singleton is gone at last,” said one.

“But his spirit remains with us,” observed Lord Wallingford.

“You mean the brandy, I suppose, Wallingford,” answered Lutwyche, pointing to a bottle of that liquor, which stood by the great epicure, who, like the deceased, was obliged to use it at meals, to assist his impaired digestion; “that, I fear, is the only spirit that he has left behind him—at least with you.”

“Club us altogether,” said Sir Nathaniel Callaghan, “and we should not be equal to Singleton.”

“No,” replied another, “we should still be too heavy.”

“You are a devilish good-natured fellow, Nat, to lament Singleton, for he always abused you. He used to call you his hone, upon which he sharpened his wit.”

“I’m like the ancient fellow, what’s-his-name?” replied the good-humoured baronet, “who said he’d rather be wrong with Plato, than right with any other man; so I’d prefer being abused by Singleton, to being praised by anybody else.”

“He used to say of you, ‘I know not a duller nor a better-hearted fellow.’”

“Oh, he told all sorts of stories about Nat. I heard him say that he was once with him upon Hampstead hill, trying a telescope which he had purchased. The baronet brought it to bear upon St. Paul’s. ‘Well, can you see any thing?’ says Singleton; ‘See any thing!’ answered Nat, ‘there never was such a glass; there’s a lady and gentleman walking in the ball, and it brings them so near, that I can distinctly hear their conversation.’”

“ I remember, likewise,” added a third, “ he used to tell that he was once present when a man upon some occasion or another, said to Nat, ‘ Sir Nathaniel, I believe you to be a gentleman of the most honourable principles.’ ‘ Sir,’ returned the Baronet, ‘ I detest flattery.’ ”

“ You are a fortunate man, Callaghan, you will outlive us all ; your name will go down to posterity, embalmed in ridicule.”

“ Well, gentlemen,” answered the Baronet, “ as I cannot be witty myself, I am too happy to be the cause of wit in other men. I am delighted to have it in my power to oblige my good friends, for if I had not lived, many of them, I am persuaded, would never have been accounted wits. Therefore, when I die, I shall have the consolatory reflection, that I have not been useless in my generation.”

“ Very well, my boy,” cried Lutwyche, “ a very fair retort ; but to return to poor Singleton, (would that he could return to us !) I don’t think I ever saw him more splendid than the very last night he supped with me, just before he was taken ill.”

“ Ah ! I remember,” said Wallingford, “ he got gloriously drunk.”

“ True,” answered Lutwyche, “ but I doubt whether you speak from personal recollection, for I ’m pretty sure that, contrary to your usual practice, you took precedence that night.”

“ Very likely,” returned the Peer ; “ it was a pretty equal match between Singleton and me ; we were generally the last to quit the field ; I liked him for that, among other things, he never flinched from his liquor.”

“ No, he was a valiant drinker ; whenever he opened a bottle, even though single-handed, he would fling away the cork like a bold soldier, who, when he draws his sword, throws down the scabbard, determined to fight as long as he can.”

“ Well, here ’s his health ; Heaven help me ! his memory, I mean,” said Dick ; “ and if he ’s gone to the devil, I hope he ’ll treat him handsomely, for he hasn’t a cleverer, nor a better fellow in his dominions, and that is saying a great deal.”

“ What a d—d shame to joke and laugh

upon such a subject," cried Colonel Pickering, "when, if we had any hearts, we should all be dull and sad."

"Now, to my thinking," answered the host, "that would be paying a very bad compliment to the memory of a wit, which ought to make us merry instead of sad. I know it would afford me great satisfaction, if I could presume to think, that after my death, the recollection of me should excite roars of laughter."

"I don't admire practical jokes," returned Pickersgill, "so let's hear no more of that, Dick, pray. Your life may be a jest, but your death would be a very grave matter."

"*Apropos* of death, Sydenham," said one; "is it true that you're going to be married?"

"I really cannot tell you," answered I, "death is certain, as the psalmist says, and matrimony, though not quite so sure, is like the other, an event which may happen to a man when he least expects it."

"Somebody told me that you were going to marry Lady Charlotte Haviland."

“I don’t see how I can marry another man’s wife, for she’s now Lady Charlotte Cookson, unless indeed you mean that I’m to have the reversion of her.”

“I’m glad to hear you disavow the charge, Sydenham, my boy,” said Lutwyche; “take my advice, and never wed, or if you do, let it not be for love, but money; when a man becomes domestic, I give him up; you cannot serve wit and woman.”

“You recollect Tom Rawlinson?”

“Yes, to be sure I do, and one of the most promising lads I ever knew, but ruined by a pretty face; do you know what is become of him?”

“I had a letter from him the other day, in which he heartily wishes that his angel was in Heaven. He’s heartily sick of being the happiest man alive, I promise you. He writes in low spirits, poor fellow, and begs that his memory may be drunk in solemn silence.”

“It serves him right,” said Dick; “what business had he to put his head into the noose?”

“It was not to be expected that he should escape, for, being a devilish good-looking fellow, he was surrounded by admirers. All the women were dying for him.”

“If that had been my case,” rejoined Lutwyche, who was grotesquely hideous, “I should have said with beau Fielding, ‘Let them look on and die.’”

“Of fright, I suppose you mean. I recollect Singleton used to say of you, Dick, that if his wife was in the family way, he’d have you tied up, lest the sight of you should affect her offspring.”

“You look as if you had been shaped by the hand of chaos, or as if Nature had designed you for a caricature of the human form.”

“My father and mother were very handsome people,” said Dick, who relished these compliments upon his personal appearance very highly.

“That is the reason why you are so diabolically ugly,” observed Nat Callaghan; “two affirmatives make a negative.”

“Nat, you have absolutely said something

which might possibly be termed witty ; that is portentous."

"I shall communicate the fact to Mrs. Chilton," said I, "she will add it to her catalogue of signs, which announce the approach of the battle of Armageddon."

"And who the devil is Mrs. Chilton?" was the general inquiry.

I explained. The prophetess of P—— was unbagged ; the wits gave tongue, and in a few minutes the poor old lady was torn to pieces.

I can recollect nothing else worthy of repetition.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE morning I received a letter marked "private," from my friend Ball, informing me that a meeting to petition for Reform had been *got up* by his agency, and not being aware of the course of conduct to which I had committed myself with respect to this question, urged that I should take the chair, while he moved the resolutions! He added, "It is extremely desirable with a view to *our (!) future project*, that you should come forward thus early and prominently, and your doing so, besides forwarding your own interest (of which I am taking care) very materially, will have an air of magnanimity, considering the relation in

which you and your family have stood toward the borough. You have now an opportunity of clinching the business, so pray do not delay coming, as the meeting is to be held on Tuesday next."

Now it was really too good, that after having proved too much for the most experienced and eminent flatcatchers, the Metcalfs, and the Havilands, the Tewkesburys, and the Singletons, I should at length become the tool of a provincial practitioner. — I was a good deal amused by the impudence and familiarity of this profligate blackguard, whom I considered merely as one of those instruments which politicians are sometimes obliged to employ, though not without disgust, in the hidden and dirty work of their profession. As it no longer suited my purpose therefore, to keep up any further connection with this fellow, I thought proper to drop the half serious, half contemptuous manner with which I had received his former advances, and effectually to repel his vulgar presumption by the following brief note.

“ Sir Matthew Sydenham informs Mr. Ball that he cannot have the honour of presiding at the meeting on Tuesday next referred to by Mr. B. in consequence of being obliged to attend the House of Commons on that day for the purpose of opposing the measure which it is the object of that meeting to sanction.”

About a week afterward I found in one of the daily prints the following paragraph, headed “ Meeting at P—— in support of His Majesty’s Ministers.”

“ We regret that our space will not permit us to give a full report of this meeting : Mr. Thomas Ball moved the resolutions in a speech of great eloquence and ability, in the course of which he commented, with much severity, and a happy vein of ridicule upon the two families, the Houses of Haviland, and Sydenham, which had hitherto usurped the privilege of returning both members for the borough. He read a most insolent note from Sir Matthew Sydenham in reply to a polite and respectful requisition which Mr. Ball had forwarded to the honour-

able Baronet to attend the meeting. The resolutions were passed unanimously. Too much praise cannot be given to the public-spirited conduct of Mr. Ball on this occasion, as he is an influential member of one of those corporations which are to be deprived of their exclusive privileges by the ministerial measure. The Marquis of Daventry and Sir Matthew Sydenham were burnt in effigy at the cross, in the market-place, in the evening. These demonstrations of popular feeling may serve to alarm the fears, if they cannot convince the understandings of the base, bigoted, and interested supporters of the present system of corruption. &c. &c. &c."

Politics grew every day more and more interesting, and I became so completely involved in them, that I had literally no time for private feelings. It does not come within the province of such a work as this to enter into details which belong to history, and of course I am precluded from divulging the cabinet councils of the party to which I belonged. As far as regards myself, it is sufficient to say that the

share which I took in their deliberations and public proceedings was sufficiently prominent to make me a mark for the opposition both within the House and out of doors. The press indulged its peculiar talent of abuse, with great brilliancy upon my humble self, as an active anti-reformer, a *ci-devant* borough proprietor, a borough member, and lastly, as a gentleman. In the House I fared better; there my enemies could not assail me from behind a wall, and it was not my practice when I had an antagonist on the floor to deal with him in a spirit of clemency. The fact is, I had a keen weapon, which I knew how to use, and which I did not spare. I made, therefore, two or three *merciful examples*, in order to deter others. The consequence was, that the bully Bottoms who subsequently put themselves forward, roared me as gently as any sucking dove, and were suffered to escape uninjured, because unnoticed. Not that I am an advocate for a frequent and indiscriminate flourish of this brilliant and mischievous weapon, which is contemptible unless employed merely as the auxiliary of weightier

arms. It is extremely serviceable, however, in great debates, to clear the ground of the stragglers and coxcombs on both sides, who are ever ready to rush into the fray, distracting the attention of the spectators by their noise, and impeding the encounters of the regular combatants.

Political agitations seldom ruffled my equanimity. I was fearless, I may say, from conscious strength, and the absence of personal interest in the conflict. I possessed, I believe, none of the higher attributes of eloquence; I could neither thunder nor lighten, perhaps, but I could reason in perspicuous and forcible language; I was as cold, and cutting, as highly tempered and polished as steel; I could deprive others of their self-command, without for a moment losing my own, and inflict agonizing pain with a mild and gentlemanly manner. It occasionally happened that my antagonist smarting with wounds, and exasperated at being foiled at these intellectual weapons, would appeal to those of a carnal nature, with which he was more conversant. Once and only once I

was really obliged to go out and stand as a mark for the lead of one, who had the preceding evening been the butt of my satire. Fortunately the blockhead did no more damage than spoiling a new hat, which was perforated by the ball intended for my brains. Apollo preserved me—

“Mercurialium
Custos virorum.”

CHAPTER VIII.

I WAS a constant attendant at Mrs. Majendie's parties, which I could frequent without postponing parliamentary duties, as they were held on every Wednesday evening, nor had I usually any other evening engagement on that day, having refused a subscription to Almack's. —Indeed, I had altogether abandoned balls and routs, tired of quizzing my humble servants the dandies, flirting with pretty women and girls, and tormenting their husbands and mothers with the pains of jealousy, and the sickness of hope deferred. The rational and agreeable conversation which obtained in South-Audley-Street was much more to my new or rather

restored taste. Besides, here was the only chance of my meeting the female Paulets, whom I now scarcely ever saw at home, being, indeed, seldom asked, and always finding an ostensible excuse in my political engagements.

At these meetings it was by no means my policy to avoid coming into contact with Miss Paulet; on the contrary, we talked together with as much frankness, as if nothing had happened. Her manner had, indeed, lost that charming confidence and cordiality which it had manifested toward me at the Priory, but there was nothing extraordinary in this change, which frequently takes place in the intercourse of persons, when they meet in town after having been the most extreme friends in the country. Her diffidence and embarrassment had likewise disappeared, and she had completely recovered her self-possession. It is true I could never forgive her for having attempted to practise upon me, nor could I sink from love into friendship, even had she not lost my esteem; but still I felt myself irresistibly attracted to her society, and such was its fascination, that my belief in

her hollowness was sometimes suspended, although I could never get rid of the evidence of my senses. Had the testimony been less conclusive, it could never have prevailed against the impression which I had received of her character. At those moments of delusion when I stood under the influence of her outward attractions, I was elated by a hope that her conduct with respect to young Axford might still be explained, although it would be hard to say how or when ; but conversant as I was with the hypocrisy of man and womankind, it was most ungrateful to think that one who was every thing amiable and admirable without, could be so utterly hollow within.

Lady Jane Paulet, whose disposition was exceedingly open, could not, like her more prudent sister-in-law, control her feelings with regard to me. She continued to treat me with anger and dislike, sometimes even approaching to contempt, insomuch, that at length I thought proper considering the palpable change that had taken place in her manner, as contrasted with the kind and friendly nature of our intercourse

up to a very recent period, to take some notice of it, and require, in self-justification, some explanation of this caprice, for such I must presume it to be, until I was made acquainted with its cause.

In pursuance of this resolution, I sought an opportunity one evening at Mrs. Majendie's of detaching Lady Jane from the persons near her ; which I did not succeed in doing until I had whispered that I had a few words to say to her, which I did not wish to be overheard. We then walked to a table where prints were exhibited in another room, and before I could speak she asked me, with a reddening cheek and some impatience, what I had to say ?

“ Lady Jane,” said I, “ you must not consider me presumptuous or impertinent, if the estimation in which I hold your good opinion and friendship induces me to take the liberty of questioning you whether I have been so unfortunate lately as to have forfeited either ?”

“ Oh, certainly not — I am not aware — I know nothing of Sir Matthew—how should you have offended me ?”

“ Pardon me if I say that I know you too well to believe you capable of caprice, and it is impossible to mistake your manner. Something I must have unconsciously done to displease you, or I have been misrepresented. I beg, in candour and justice, that you will condescend to be explicit.”

Lady Jane remained silent for a few seconds, and then answered,

“ I can hardly comply with your request without the risk of being misunderstood, but I am sure that your own conduct justifies any coldness which you may experience from us. Not that I would have you suppose it gives us any concern—no, not *one* of us,” she added energetically ; “ at the same time I will candidly tell you that you have disappointed—that is, we took you to be a very different sort of person.”

“ In what respect? you are still not wholly intelligible. Ever since I perceived the alteration in your manner, I have been full of conjectures as to the cause, but having been able to fix upon none as having a reasonable degree of probability, I determined to appeal to your-

self. And I do implore you, therefore, not to evade me, as I am persuaded that by confidence on both sides, the matter may be cleared up to our mutual satisfaction."

"Well, then, I will tell you—but, mind, I only speak for myself, and from my own observation; and I tell you plainly that if she does not perceive it, I am determined to resent any thing in the shape of an attempt to slight or trifle with my sister Alice." She stopped, and was much agitated, as if she feared going too far.

"To slight—Miss Paulet! Good Heavens, Lady Jane!"

"Yes, Sir Matthew," interrupted she, with increased heat, "I mean by paying her such marked attention at first, and then afterwards altogether relaxing."

"I thank you," replied I, "for not concealing the true cause, as I can now, indeed, explain every thing. Ever since my first acquaintance with your family at Christmas last, I was treated with such kindness, and subse-

quently admitted on so familiar a footing, (I shall ever remember those days with gratitude and pleasure,) that perhaps I cultivated with more assiduity than I ought the friendship of your accomplished and most amiable sister. This did not occur to myself, until I observed that Miss Paulet was solicited by, and acquiesced in the claim of another gentleman, with whose pretensions I thought that the extreme intimacy that had subsisted between me and her was not quite consistent; therefore—”

“Claim! what claim? what other gentleman? What do you mean, Sir Matthew?”

“I really must beg your indulgence. I know that I presume in adverting to such a subject, but you must recollect that I am on my defence, and allow me some latitude.”

“Certainly,” answered Lady Jane, eagerly; “pray go on; I see here is some mistake, indeed. Do you mean Captain Axford?”

“I do.”

“Then I can assure you positively that there is not the slightest foundation for the notion

you have taken into your head. Alice considers him only as a brother — I assure you upon my honour.”

I smiled incredulously, and Lady Jane was proceeding, when, at this interesting point, our conversation was broken off. Before the evening was over, however, I took an opportunity of saying to her,—

“I trust the explanation is complete, as far as I am concerned; more I have no right to demand;” and with this I offered my hand in token of reconciliation: she received it, but not without hesitation, and with no good grace. My last remark did not seem to please her.

CHAPTER IX.

UNSATISFACTORILY as this explanation had ended on both sides, the strong denial that Lady Jane had given to the sentiments with regard to Captain Axford, which I had imputed to Alice, was certainly entitled to consideration; but though nothing, as the reader will believe, could have more delighted me than to yield her assertion implicit credit, it would be mere infatuation, after *what I had seen*, to afford it any weight. The result of my reflection on the subject was indeed to confirm the evidence against Miss Paulet, at the same time that it completely acquitted in my mind her candid sister-in-law of any participation in her schemes, with which she was obviously unacquainted.

Lady Jane, as often as I saw her, seemed desirous of resuming the subject, but I industriously avoided meeting her wishes, for a farther *éclaircissement*, under the circumstances, was not desirable. She could hardly persist in assuring me that I had misconstrued her sister's feelings toward Axford, unless I intimated that I was personally affected by them, and of course I did not choose to commit myself. Besides, even if I should give her to understand that I was interested in Miss Paulet's sentiments, I could not refuse to be convinced by her protestations, unless I gave my reason for doubting, and how could I do this without disclosing the duplicity of Alice, and causing dissension between the sisters? This was the dilemma in which I found myself. The good offices of a third person relieved me from it, and brought about that full and complete understanding which subsequently took place.

This friend was Lady Eleanor Palmer. If there was any person to whom I could have confided the secret of my heart, she was that person. Her time of life, her good sense and

kindness, and the regard which I knew she entertained for myself, rendered her the most eligible adviser I could have selected upon such a matter; but I could not bear that my weakness should be exposed, even to the inquiring eye of friendship. Whenever, therefore, she attempted to advert in a peculiar manner to the Paulets, I always evaded the topic, and she had too much discretion and delicacy to press it at an unpropitious moment.

It was some days after the above detailed conversation between Lady Jane and myself, that I was dining with the Palmers by themselves, when Palmer being obliged to go to the house early upon business, Lady Eleanor and I were left together.

“Have you seen the Paulets lately?” inquired she.

“Yes, a few days ago.”

“Don’t you think Alice is looking very ill?”

“No, it did not strike me so; she seemed in very good spirits the other evening, at Mrs. Majendie’s. But if it were otherwise, it would

not be surprising in a young lady in her situation."

"How do you mean?"

"Why she has an *affaire*, you know."

"With whom, pray?"

"With Captain Axford, the Member's son."

"I assure you, you were never more mistaken. She has no thoughts of young Axford; I know that *for a fact*."

I smiled.

"What should make you suppose it? Indeed it is not true."

"I am sure you believe so," answered I, "but it occurred to me by mere accident to be possessed of such a proof to the contrary, that you must excuse me if I say that you are the mistaken party."

"You astonish me; what possible proof could you have had? you have no objection to tell me?"

"I certainly have no objection to tell you, but you are the only person to whom I would mention it, and I do so in confidence, simply to set you right upon the matter. It would

be utterly unjustifiable in me to gossip the thing about, and if it is a secret, I only regret that I was involuntarily put in possession of it." I then plainly described what I had witnessed in the garden.

"Well," said Lady Eleanor, after a few moments' pause, "now I have heard your story, and I don't think it by any means such conclusive evidence as you do. Are you aware that this young man has been long attached to Alice Paulet, and proposed for her some time ago?"

"I was not aware of that fact, but it was quite clear that Axford admired her. Do you mean to say that there is not a mutual feeling?"

"I can only tell you that she refused him, and it is likely that her extreme tenderness of giving pain, might have caused her to decline his offer, in such a manner, as not utterly to extinguish hope. But I am sure, from your description, that surprise and grief were the only emotions which she experienced, on the occasion you refer to."

“Is this your real opinion?” said I.

“Indeed, indeed it is,” answered Lady Eleanor, with much earnestness; you have altogether mistaken her; I now see through it all. She has a strong feeling of regard for Captain Axford, but nothing more, believe me; her affections,” added my friend, with a significance which could not be misunderstood, “I have reason to suspect, are otherwise engaged.”

“You have relieved my mind inexpressibly; yes, my dear Lady Eleanor, I should be unworthy of your kindness, did I hesitate any longer to confess, that I am deeply interested in Miss Paulet’s sentiments: now tell me, I beseech you, whether you think I should be received with favour?”

Lady Eleanor’s countenance sufficiently answered the question.

“I think,” said she with a smile, “I can venture to afford you some faint hope. How happy I am that this mystery has been elucidated! for though I was well aware that you were sometimes disposed to be not quite so respectful as you ought towards our sex, I had

too good an opinion of your discrimination and taste, to suppose that you would presume to consider Alice Paulet a person to be treated with levity. When I heard, therefore, how much you were in her society, I own I did hope that the influence of her character might restore to you a more healthy tone of feeling with regard to women ; nay, more, it was my favourite wish that I might see you united."

"You could not wish me a more enviable fortune."

"I am delighted to hear you say so, Sydenham, for I have always fought your battles, and maintained against those who asserted the contrary, that you were neither heartless nor depraved, and that your misanthropy was brought on by bad associates. The world contains much no doubt, to excite indignation and disgust, but still it presents at least as much to inspire different sentiments. Now what are you reflecting about ? Come, I must not suffer you to relapse into any of your suspicions."

"Believe me," answered I, "they are too unwelcome guests, and I have suffered too much

from them already, to be desirous of entertaining them longer, but still Lady Eleanor's complete conviction must supply their place, otherwise they will intrude."

"Conviction ! unreasonable man ! what do you require ? Am I to tell you that a young lady has acknowledged her attachment to a gentleman who has never declared himself ?"

"Certainly," answered I, "that would be exceedingly indelicate."

"And permit me to add," rejoined Lady Eleanor, "exceedingly mean-spirited ; I hope that no friend of mine will ever so far compromise the dignity of her sex. But, joking apart, are you not delighted to have this matter cleared up ?"

"Why then, setting aside the dignity of my own sex, I do confess that I am greatly elated by the explanation which you have given ; and if my suit should be favoured by Miss Paulet, I become the happiest man alive."

"I wish," cried Lady Eleanor, "you would commission me as your ambassadress."

"Many thanks, my dear friend ; I shall cer-

tainly take advantage of your kind offer, but not just immediately ; I will sleep a night upon it."

"Very well ; and now, Sir, away with you to the House, public duty must not be postponed for any consideration. But if you should rise, take care that you don't address the Speaker, as ' dearest Alice ! ' "

CHAPTER X.

IT would be difficult to say whether I felt most rejoiced at being disabused of my delusions with respect to Miss Paulet's conduct, or at the prospect which was opened to me by the dissipation of those clouds. It was delightful to find that the woman whom I had believed to approach the nearest to perfection, was not indeed a hypocrite, and certainly not less gratifying was it to be assured that she was not the property of another. I could not well endure so sudden an elevation, from the depth of despondency to the pinnacle of hope, insomuch that the caution of Lady Eleanor was scarcely exaggerated, for so entirely was my mind occupied by this exhilarating subject, that upon

reaching the House, I must have talked, I suppose, in a rather incoherent manner, being recalled to my senses by a member asking me with a significant smile,

“Sydenham, where have you been dining?”

That I might not act under the influence of excitement, I took two days to reflect before I committed myself. The result was, my full conviction that Lady Eleanor's explanation was entitled to implicit credit, and that it would be ungracious any longer to defer bringing the matter to a crisis. My determination was candidly to lay before Alice the history of my feelings during the last six months, doubting not, that the apparent caprice which I had of late shown would be thus fully accounted for to her satisfaction, and it would then only remain for her to consult her own inclinations, in deciding upon my proposal.

But, as if a malignant fate had decided ever to interpose between me and any happiness founded upon good feeling, and to prevent me from adopting any opinions favourable to human nature, on the very morning that I purposed

putting my important resolve into execution, I received, by the twopenny post, the following letter.

“SIR,

I am perfectly aware, that in addressing you anonymously, I do not entitle myself to your serious consideration. If circumstances permitted, I would willingly confirm this letter by my name, but even with the disadvantage of its absence, and the imputation of malignity that may consequently attach to me, I cannot resist the impulse I feel to make even this feeble effort to save you from becoming a victim to hypocrisy and manœuvring. You will be surprised what motive sufficiently strong, could have induced me to interfere upon this occasion, at the hazard of being treated with contempt as a slanderer, when I tell you that I have not the honour of your personal acquaintance, but I know those who have that advantage, and from their testimonies respecting you, I have been inspired with a high admiration of your character, and an interest in

your welfare. I have therefore heard with regret, that you are about to be married to the sister of Mr. P——, the Member for D——. As to Mr. P. himself, I have nothing to say against him; I believe that he is an excellent and honourable man. His sister, however, be it known to you, is not a person of exactly the same description. You have probably been deceived by the extreme amiability which she affects, and are not aware that she has made several unsuccessful attempts upon young men of fortune. I may specify among others, Lord H., Mr. St. J., and Captain A. The captain was her last failure before she undertook her present speculation, which, I trust, may likewise be frustrated; though she brings matured years and the effects of her experience to bear upon it. I should indeed be sorry to see the accomplished, shrewd, discriminating Sir Matthew Sydenham, who has hitherto overreached all the arts of knavery that have been practised upon him, both in public and private life, fall at length a sacrifice to a female jobber, and become a laughing-stock to his *friends*. And as he has mentioned

friends, the writer would warn you to beware of a certain elderly lady of quality, with whom you are on terms of intimacy, and who is in the interest of Miss P.

“A HATER OF HUMBUG.”

Perhaps I may be considered unjust and weak for having paid any respect to this epistle ; but if it did not actually re-open the wounds that were just closed, in truth it gave me great uneasiness. Opinions such as mine were not to be changed in a day, and though I had of late been approaching to a more indulgent way of thinking with regard to human nature, I was still more open to evidence against, than in favour of mankind. It is true that this disposition should have caused me to distrust the motives of this anonymous writer. His assertions were probably slanderous and false, but they might likewise be well founded ; he must be a person who had information on the subject, being accurate in the individuals whom he had specified as having been connected with Miss Paulet's name. His version, however, differed from mine in an essential point—the anonymous

writer said they had never asked her, whereas I had heard that she had declined them. My information was not derived either from herself or her brother, who had never made any allusion of the kind, but from Lady Jane, who once mentioned it to me, accounting for her sister's refusal of such desirable matches in a worldly point of view, on the ground that the one was an old man, and the other an objectionable character. But certainly it was not an uncommon practice for young ladies and their families to give out that they had refused men who had never afforded them an opportunity of expressing their sentiments. It was easy to suppose that the Miss Paulet of my fancy might act from such motives, but scarcely possible that the character described by the "Hater of Humbug," could be thus influenced. I felt a qualm of ingratitude, as well as injustice in entertaining for a moment the insinuation relative to Lady Eleanor Palmer, but still she might not consider it inconsistent with her regard for me, to assist her friend in endeavouring to secure such a *desirable*. Women,

even the most scrupulous in every article of morality, and propriety, think such stratagems perfectly fair and justifiable.

But who might my correspondent be? It was impossible to form any conjecture from the handwriting, which was evidently disguised and unnatural; besides, he said that he was unknown to me: could the writer be either Lord H——, or Mr. St. J——, with whom I was not personally acquainted? Though from good feeling they might have been desirous of warning me against being betrayed by wiles, which had been practised upon themselves, they might certainly have felt a reluctance to do so avowedly. I could not but think that the probability was strongly in favour of one of these gentlemen. I can assure the reader that it was with great reluctance I came to this conclusion; I would willingly have believed the letter to have been the offspring of malice or mischief, but I could not help feeling, notwithstanding my wish to treat it with contempt, that it was deserving of attention.

The consequence was, that my offer to Miss Paulet was postponed *sine die*.

CHAPTER XI.

To let the matter rest, however, in such a situation was impossible; Lady Eleanor would wonder why I delayed making my proposals, and after the confidence which had been exchanged between us on the subject, she had undoubtedly a right to expect explanation, which, indeed, it was likewise due to myself to make. The real cause I could not of course communicate, and what excuse was I to put forth?

Besides, my own feelings were too deeply interested to remain in repose under the influence of this letter. Whatever weight I might allow it to possess, I could not suffer my conduct to be governed by it; on the contrary, it was my

duty as well as my interest to leave no means untried of falsifying its assertions. This was certainly difficult, as they were of a general character; but if I could ascertain the fact of proposals having been made to Miss Paulet by Lord H——, or Mr. St. J——, I should be fully satisfied, and not hesitate another moment to make my own. I had every reason to believe from personal experience, that the writer was misinformed, or wilful in his misrepresentation, with respect to young Axford; for I should suppose it was not usual for gentlemen to kneel to ladies of character without proposing marriage. But this circumstance did not by any means acquit Miss Paulet, for she had then two strings to her bow; she probably felt pretty sure of me, and it appeared gave me the preference: under this view of her conduct, her undecided manner to that young man was clearly accounted for; she was desirous of still keeping her hold upon him as an alternative, should her design upon me fail. The inaccuracy of his statement with reference to Axford, therefore, went for nothing, except inas-

much as it afforded me reason to hope, that, as regarded the other two gentlemen, it might prove to be equally false or erroneous.

I was determined to sift the matter to the bottom, and make up my mind definitively with respect to Miss Paulet, for I could no longer endure to be distracted with doubt. Meanwhile I pleaded to Lady Eleanor the pressure of my parliamentary duties for postponing to enter into *mes affaires du cœur*. The excuse was a lame one; but Lady Eleanor accepted it, though not without some manifestation of disappointment. My first object naturally was to become acquainted with Mr. St. John, one of the individuals indicated in the anonymous letter. Lord Hauteray, the other, was abroad somewhere, but this circumstance by no means acquitted him of the authorship of the letter, because in the constant intercourse which exists between this country and the Continent, there is a regular export and import of gossip and scandal. Nothing was more probable, therefore, than that he should have heard of my attentions to Miss Paulet, and he could have

had very little difficulty in forwarding this anonymous letter to me, had he thought it worth his while to do so. It may be asked, what was the use of seeking the acquaintance of St. John, for surely if he had written the letter, he would be sufficiently on his guard not to suffer anything to escape him relative thereto. But I had a high opinion of my own dexterity in *pumping*; besides, it would answer my purpose if I could ascertain how he stood with respect to the Paulets, and this at least I thought might be effected.

St. John was notoriously a man of loose morals, but I had sufficient reliance on his honour as a gentleman, to believe that he would be incapable of calumniating any person. I had no reason to suppose that he belonged to the class of profligates, of whom my uncle was a remarkable specimen.

I soon found an opportunity of being introduced to Mr. St. John, who was in parliament, but a rare attendant at the House, being more occupied in the pursuit of his pleasures, than

by ambition or public duty. He was of the same party with myself, especially on the great question in agitation, therefore it was the most natural thing in the world that we should become known to each other. I met him, of course, with the indifference of a common political acquaintance, not to hazard the possibility of alarming suspicion. My conversation with him was at first principally confined to politics; and as I so contrived that we happened to meet frequently, we soon became, in some sort, friends. I then watched my moment for adverting to *the* topic. I took the opportunity one day, when we were discussing the reigning belles, married and single. After canvassing the merits of several, I observed that I had met with a girl in the country, who did not go out much in town, but who had struck me as being a remarkably attractive person. I then named Miss Paulet.

“Ay, so she is,” said St. John, “a very superior girl; I haven’t seen much of her lately, but I knew her very well three or four years ago.”

“And what do you think of her? I should like to know whether she really is that paragon which she seems to set up for?”

“Why, I ’m rather inclined to think that she is. I can only say that if she were a married woman, she is the last person I should think of making any attempt upon. Such is the impression which she made upon me.”

“Well, you ought to be a good judge, for you ’ve had experience, St. John; you ’ve practised in that line for some time.”

“I should certainly,” answered the rake, “be a devilish dull fellow, if I did not know something about the sex; I ’ve studied them for twenty years, Sydenham.”

“And with tolerable success, I believe. I should like much to know the result of your labours.”

“No doubt you would, but judge for yourself; you are both able and willing, I fancy, for if I mistake not, you were a pupil of poor Trevelyan’s?”

“Ay, poor fellow, but he was so blinded with vanity, that there was no reliance to be placed

on his opinions. For my own part, I'm an infidel as regards female virtue."

"Depend upon it then, you are wrong. You may have been fortunate hitherto, and possibly you've only had dealings with town-bred women, but you mustn't form your judgment of the sex from them. Now it has occurred to me, in the course of my life, to have to do with women of all classes, and I can assure you that though pretty cautious in committing myself, I have frequently been repulsed by the sheer force of virtue."

"I am afraid you have been unlucky," said I, laughing; "you have encountered too many Miss Paulets."

"No, by Jove! I never encountered anything of the kind; these were quite every-day characters of whom I speak, very different from Alice Paulet; there's a *je ne sçais quoi* about that girl; a sort of native purity and dignity which I think no person with a spark of discernment, or gentlemanly feeling, would presume to approach, except in a legitimate way."

I affected a smile of incredulity, which St.

John perceived, and declared in a tone which it was impossible to doubt, "I am serious, upon my honour!"

Could I, after this conversation, hesitate to acquit St. John of the authorship of the anonymous letter?"

CHAPTER XII.

BUT though St. John was thus clearly acquitted of having written the letter, there was still Lord Hauteray, upon whom my suspicion might rest with equal probability. It was not so easy, however, to bring matters to the proof with respect to him, and this tormented me. He was many years older than Alice, and from what I heard of him, seemed to be a sort of neutral character—that is, with no prominent traits either the one way or the other, but respectable and amiable, rather than otherwise. This certainly was not exactly the description of person likely to engage the affections of the Miss Paulet whom I esteemed and admired; but if she were actuated by mere worldly views and

feelings, such passive qualities, if they were not precisely a recommendation, would assuredly be no objection to a woman of fashion, to whom personal endowments in a husband are the least important consideration. There was one strong consolatory argument, however, which occurred to me in the case of Lord Hauteray. It was beyond a doubt that he had paid great attentions to Alice. How was it likely that such an one, as he had been represented to me, would trifle with the feelings of a young girl? I well understood the class to which Lord Hauteray belonged, and I knew that a soberer, more matter-of-fact kind of people did not exist. Undoubtedly he would have been incapable of carrying a flirtation into effect, even could he have designed it. It was much more probable that he should be actuated by petty malice on account of his refusal.

I confess that I derived great pleasure from the contemplation of this argument. Then I began to question myself, whether it was not unjust and absurd to allow this anonymous slander any weight; I paid my own boasted

discernment a bad compliment in suffering it to prevail for an instant against my own intimate experience of the person whom it affected. But then the accursed garden scene recurred—had it not been for that, I should have flung the letter into the fire at once, and banished it with contempt from my recollection. This objection, however, I overcame, and taught myself to appreciate the motives which could dictate such an unmanly and malignant proceeding. A new light now streamed upon my mind. It was a woman who had written the letter. It could be no one else. My belief is, that ninety-five out of every hundred anonymous letters, proceed from the gentler sex ; it is a measure which could emanate only from the soul of an attorney, or a woman, who is obliged to resort to such means of gratifying her revenge, for want of better. Several ladies immediately presented themselves to my recollection, to whom I gave ample credit, for the capability of taking such a step. All those, both matrons and maidens, who had courted my notice, and had obtained it, but of a kind more mortifying than

positive neglect—was it illiberal to suppose that some one of them would be induced to give a vent to her spleen, at hearing that the imperturbable and sarcastic baronet, upon whom they had in vain exhausted all their blandishments, had at length yielded to the force of other charms? What could be more likely than that some of the Havilands had endeavoured to throw this obstruction in the way. And on re-perusing the letter, it appeared to me that it must have been written by some one who was personally acquainted with my character, and who knew how to alarm my suspicions. In fact, any woman in the world who had ever known me, might have written it.

How then should I act? Why suffer myself to be blown about by every breath of suspicion and circumstance? It would be weakness any longer to endure this state of mind. This affair actually suspended my faculties, and prevented me occupying my time about any other pursuits; and what satisfaction, after all, was to be gained by entertaining these inter-

minable doubts and distractions? I was resolved to bring the business to a settlement, and that too without any farther delay.

I had put the anonymous letter in my pocket, and was about going to Lady Eleanor Palmer, for the purpose of opening my whole mind to her upon the subject, when a note was delivered to me from herself, requesting that I would call upon her at my earliest convenience, as she wished to speak to me about something of importance.

I had little time for conjecture, as to the nature of the particular business upon which I was wanted, for Palmer's house was but three minutes' walk from my own, and I followed upon the heels of Lady Eleanor's messenger.

"I thank you," said she, "for the promptitude with which you have answered my summons. I will not employ a word of circumlocution in what I have to communicate to you. Read that. So saying, she put into my hands a letter, which, to my surprise, was in the same constrained and artificial handwriting as that

which had caused me so much uneasiness. On looking at the signature, I found only these words. "A Friend of Innocence." It was clear that this "Friend of Innocence," and my "Hater of Humbug," were one and the same person. But to the contents.—They were slanders and insinuations against my character. I was represented as a heartless libertine; a man without principle or feeling; but with sufficient talent and accomplishment to assume every cameleon shade of character to deceive the persons with whom I associated, whether for purposes of malice or profligacy. It was addressed to Miss Paulet. The writer's apology was indignation against vice and fraud, and a desire to preserve amiability and worth, from deception and misery.

"Well," cried Lady Eleanor, eagerly, when I had scarcely yet finished the perusal, during which she had studied my countenance with intense anxiety; "what do you say to it?"

"My answer is short, and, I trust, conclusive." So saying, I drew from my pocket, and handed her the other of the twin epistles. She

observed this motion with an expression of surprise ; but immediately received and devoured my letter with trembling haste. Having read it, she uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

“ Thank Heaven ! I am more happy than I can express ! my bane and antidote are now both before me !”

“ Believe me I am not less relieved than yourself, by this exchange of letters. It is most satisfactory that each has received the most conclusive refutation that could be offered, by the production of the other. I would give a thousand pounds to discover the author.”

“ Whoever the base wretch may be,” answered Lady Eleanor, “ he or she is unworthy of a moment’s consideration. Let us rather congratulate each other that this explanation has taken place. Oh, how could you keep such a letter in your possession a day, without communicating it to me, or some other mutual friend ? And how could you, for a moment, doubt, and on such evidence, my darling Alice ? But I will not reproach you, for I am too happy that both parties are exonerated.”

In the openness of the moment, and the delight with which this *éclaircissement* filled me, I committed myself, and acknowledged fully to Lady Eleanor my sentiments with respect to Alice Paulet. Her benevolent countenance betrayed the pleasure which this communication afforded her; and consequently she no longer hesitated to disclose to me the grateful fact, that Alice entertained reciprocal sentiments. She had, from the first, been in possession of the secret; but her young friend's honour had thus, as it were, been placed in her guardianship, and she could not possibly say a word upon the subject, until I had confessed myself. She now declared her complete satisfaction at what had taken place. "I had always set my heart upon this match," said she; "I knew that you would appreciate real excellence, for I always said that your contempt of the world proceeded from fastidiousness, and not from coldness of heart. How dear Jane will rejoice, for she was really beginning to hate you, because she thought you slighted her sister."

“ I assure you,” answered I, “ that none of the party can be more gratified than I am at coming to an explanation, but—”

“ Surely,” interrupted Lady Eleanor, “ there is no happiness without a ‘ but ’ ; yet I should like to know what business that ominous monosyllable should have at present.”

“ Nothing of importance,” I replied ; “ nothing which cannot, I dare say, be easily explained. I am confident you would wish that suspicion should be utterly eradicated from my mind ; for if the smallest part of it were suffered to remain, there is no security that at some future period it will not sprout up afresh.”

I then proceeded to relate to her my misgivings with respect to Captain Axford ; and especially that shrubbery scene, which had been the foundation of all my doubt and misery.

“ And is this really the cause of your keeping back ? Well, I suspected as much from your conversation the other day, and I said as much as I then could to do away such an impression. It is now, however, necessary I

should tell that young Axford, poor fellow, had proposed for Alice, before you ever saw her. Unfortunately for him, her refusal was given in such gentle and considerate terms, as not entirely to destroy hope. He renewed his addresses on his return to the country where you met him. Alice, apprehensive of such an event, but still doubtful whether his attentions were not suggested purely by sentiments of the same regard which she felt toward him, did not adopt a sufficiently decisive manner. The consequence was, that he renewed his solicitations with more earnestness than before, though with a much worse chance of success ; for you know how her affections had been since disposed of. This, I assure you, is the whole truth of the matter. Are you satisfied ?”

“ How is it possible, my dear Lady Eleanor, that I should be otherwise ? This is the happiest day of my life. I shall be ashamed to look Miss Paulet in the face, after my capricious and distrustful conduct. Can she forget and forgive it, think you ?”

“ I think I can hold out to you some hope that you will not find her altogether implacable,” answered Lady Eleanor, with a smile. “ When do you purpose making your atonement ?”

“ Without delay—to-morrow ?”

“ To-morrow ? why not to-day ? I have no patience with your to-morrows.”

“ Well, be it so ; I will go there forthwith.”

“ Take your hat then and your departure ; I never welcomed you with such pleasure, as I now turn you out of the house.”

CHAPTER XIII.

I PROCEEDED straightway to Paulet's house, but was denied, and returning home I had leisure to reflect upon what had passed between me and Lady Eleanor Palmer. View that conversation and communication in whatever light I could, it would be mere captiousness to withhold from them my entire confidence, or to refuse to admit that they were, in every respect, completely satisfactory. If I had any regard for human evidence or integrity, I must allow this. A conspiracy defeated strengthens a government, and the exposure of the base attempt of my anonymous enemy to malign Lady Eleanor and Alice Paulet, heightened and confirmed my esteem for those

admirable persons. Thank Heaven! then all my doubts were dissipated, my misery terminated, my disappointment converted into brilliant hope! My discernment had not been deceived, and there was some virtue extant.

From what a weight was my mind relieved! Under the impression that I had fixed my best affections upon one, who was either unworthy of, or incapable of returning my regard, life had been deprived of the only lasting charm that it had ever presented to me, and, not to speak it sentimentally, I cared not how soon I should be rid of such a wearisome existence. Disgusted with the fancied ill success of my first disposition to regard man and womankind with a favourable eye, I was fast relapsing into the habits of the worst period of my misanthropy. But now how was the scene changed! the transition was altogether to the opposite extreme, and such was the reaction, that I was now tempted to repudiate my former opinions, and to think henceforth generously of the whole world.

Upon consideration I preferred communicat-

ing my sentiments to Miss Paulet in writing, rather than a personal interview, in the first instance. I wrote therefore a candid statement of my feelings, and explanation of my conduct. I told her, with perfect truth, that she was the only one of her sex who had impressed me with that degree of respect and admiration which was essential to the sentiment I now ventured to profess. I concealed none of my past suspicions as to the nature of her intercourse with Captain Axford, because this confession was necessary to account for my conduct; I was indebted to the kind offices of a mutual friend, for removing that unfortunate misunderstanding, to whom likewise I was placed under an everlasting obligation for having entirely confirmed me, if at any time I had suffered the habits of my character and former experience so far to prevail, as to affect my belief in the sincerity of Miss Paulet herself. I expressed my deepest gratitude to her for having rejected with indignation the charges and insinuations contained in the anonymous letter, and referred her to the corresponding document in Lady

Eleanor Palmer's possession to corroborate her estimate of the writer's motives. I concluded by offering her in the most earnest language that I could command, my hand, and fortune, and devoted love.

Within four-and-twenty hours after this important communication had been dispatched I received her answer. I need not speak of the palpitation which the sight of her hand-writing produced, and the breathless anxiety with which I read the following letter.

“ I should be unworthy of the frankness with which you have treated me, were I to feel a moment's hesitation in acknowledging that your letter has afforded me more gratification than any other event within my recollection. At the same time, however, that I make this admission, and give entire credit to your explanation respecting the circumstances of the last six months, I must decline at present to receive the sentiments which you have expressed as conclusive. Both for your sake and my own, I must adhere to my determination of

begging that you will abstain from any hasty measure, which in the impulse of the moment, you might feel disposed to urge. You say that I am the first person for whom you have felt a preference, but this partiality may be transient and unreal. You will no doubt tell me the contrary, but time only can enable you to speak with any confidence upon this point; should we now enter into a rash engagement, what bitter repentance would be left to you when the delusion was past; as for myself the most cruel disappointment in the first instance, would be a trifle compared with the misery to which I should be condemned for life. The sentiments you have expressed invest me with a right to give utterance to my wishes; I exact no promise from you, you are as free as if I had never experienced from you any other attentions than those of a common acquaintance. I could wish to see little or nothing of you for the next year, at the expiration of which, if you found your present feelings unchanged, I do not think I should be disposed to offer any farther obstacle.

“ALICE PAULET.”

At first I felt disposed to quarrel with this letter, as being cold and calculating, but a little reflection brought me to view it in its true character. I felt, indeed, that my past life was not the best guarantee for happiness in the matrimonial state. It is certain I had the reputation of a man of pleasure, though I was an object of detestation to certain ladies for the mockery which, in the wantonness of spleen and conscious power, I had practised upon them. I cannot deny, however, that I had some *liaisons*, with the particulars of which I have not thought it necessary to trouble the reader, for in truth they would tell, in no point of view, to my credit. More heartless, listless connections never existed. These were a source of continual uneasiness to me, while I was on terms of probation, as it were, with the Paulet family. I was apprehensive lest they should come to the ears of Alice, before I had gained a sufficient interest in her affections to enable me to hope that such a disclosure would not be fatal to my hopes. Paulet himself, from not mingling much in gay society, was imperfectly acquainted with the character which

I had borne in those circles. He was of course not ignorant of my connection with the Oliphants, for this was once a nine days' wonder, but he was satisfied that my conduct had been misrepresented in that business, although he was not aware that I had designedly trifled with the lady. Paulet was no puritan; but the nobleness of his mind, and his natural character, led him to avoid every sensuality and baseness, and to view them, not through the false medium which the world interposes, but with the unsophisticated eye of virtue. A profligate character was therefore extremely offensive to his high morality. I well knew that he would have held no such intimate communion with me as that which existed between us, had his opinion of me coincided with that of the world. In truth, I felt humbled in the presence of this high-minded person, but it was a salutary humility, which caused me to blush at my past life, and to feel a sincere desire of amendment. At the same time I knew myself too well to hope that I could accomplish this without assistance; I

felt that my amelioration was dependent upon my union with Alice.

It is needless to tell the reader how I dwelt upon her letter, and most especially that first sentence, which was the soul of it. I shall not expose myself to laughter by giving a catalogue of the extravagancies which I committed under the excitement which it produced. These fooleries are excusable under such circumstances, and I hope most men and women have indulged in them at some period of their lives; but, nevertheless, they do not read well, so I draw a veil over this part of the business, and come to the first interview that took place between Alice and myself, after the mutual expression of our sentiments.

CHAPTER XIV.

BUT previously I must mention, that I considered it due to Mr. Paulet, as the nearest surviving relative of his sister, who lived under his guardianship, to communicate to him the step which I had taken. Indeed my private respect and regard for the man would have made me ask for his sanction, even had not etiquette demanded it.

“I thank you, Sydenham,” answered he, “for this early information of your purposes. But I am already acquainted with them : my sister has shown me your letter ; what her reply has been I know not, for I declined influencing her judgment in the slightest degree in a matter upon which she alone ought to

decide. I only spoke to the best of my knowledge and belief of your character. Whatever her choice may be, I am quite confident that it will meet my entire approbation."

To this I made answer by laying before him his sister's letter. He read it with an earnest attention, scarcely less than my own, and his satisfaction at the contents was most vividly depicted in his countenance. Having read it, he grasped my hand warmly.

"My dear Sydenham," said he, "I congratulate you from my soul. This is no moment for affectation. You have been acquainted with Alice only for a few months; I have known her intimately since she was a child, and, without partiality, I assure you she is superior to any of her sex that I have ever known, yet I have the happiness of numbering amongst my friends and connections many most amiable women. I observed with pleasure the growing intimacy between my sister and yourself, because I believed that you could appreciate her excellence; and though I will not conceal from you that I could wish for a change in some

of your opinions and practice, (I may take the freedom of saying so much now,) yet I am persuaded that upon the whole you and my sister are well suited to each other."

I need not say that I returned these kind expressions with equal warmth and candour. To be the accepted of Alice, and the approved of her brother, I felt to be really more than my deserts, although, as the reader has by this time possibly perceived, I by no means underrated them. I was, in point of fact, the happiest of mankind.

In this state of mind I prepared to encounter Alice—not, however, with that coolness and confidence with which I had been wont to go forth to similar scenes, but absolutely nervous and diffident as a neophyte: consequently I did not expect to get through my part with half the address with which I usually acquitted myself.

The meeting was at her brother's house. Nothing could be more marked than Lady Jane's reception of me upon this occasion. The ungracious manner which had recently given

me so much offence was replaced by more than her former warmth and cordiality. Though she said nothing on the subject, her looks plainly told how much she repented having misconstrued my conduct. The constancy of Alice was comparatively less affected than my own by our meeting. She returned the pressure of my hand—was slightly tremulous, certainly—but there were no airs and graces, no unnecessary blushing and confusion assumed.

During dinner the conversation was general, and but little of it. Soon after the cloth was removed, Paulet withdrew to the House, and I followed the ladies to the drawing-room.

I found no one there besides Lady Jane and her sister. The former, in her anxiety to leave Alice and me together, retired with some precipitation a few minutes after I had entered the room. Alice blushed, and I smiled, as our eyes met, with the consciousness of this well-meaning movement. After a pregnant pause of a few seconds, I opened the expected conference.

“How can I ever be sufficiently grateful to you,” said I, “for overlooking all my way-

wardness and caprice ! but you know the cause, and believe me I have suffered almost enough to atone for it."

" I know it all ; I am too happy in this explanation, to think of the past : you are guilty of no waywardness or caprice ; you were under a misconception, for which I was to blame."

" I am rejoiced that you fully comprehend my conduct. Indeed, I have loved you with a most sincere and ardent affection ; and my professions are entitled to the more respect, because I can honestly declare, that in all my experience of your sex, which has not been very limited, to you alone could I give my heart and hand ; nay, I may say with truth, that I have never known the slightest sentiment of attachment for any other woman. The love that I offer you, Alice, is not the headstrong passion of a boy, but the profound esteem and reasoned warmth of a man, who has seen much of the world, whose feelings are slow in their operation, and who is in no danger of being deluded by the semblance of a sentiment, which has no solid

foundation. In setting out in life, I did not expect domestic happiness, because I thought it improbable that I should come in contact with one who combined all those qualities, without which I was persuaded, from a knowledge of my own character, I could not appreciate the felicity of the matrimonial state. You, however—and credit me, I speak this in sober earnestness, for I would not trifle with you by idle rhapsodies—you, dearest Miss Paulet, have realized the image of my fancy—I do not exaggerate when I say, that you excel my liveliest expectations. To have gained your regard, I consider the highest good fortune; no event could be more flattering to my ambition, and this world can offer me no prospect half so attractive as an union with you.”

To this declaration, Alice listened with earnest and gratified attention.

After a short silence I proceeded. “There is only one part of your letter which I am disposed to murmur at: why should you urge such a delay? Can you not be satisfied of my stability without a twelvemonth’s probation? I

pray you, dearest Alice, not to insist upon that; it looks like lukewarmness on your part."

"You would do me great injustice," replied Miss Paulet, "were you to imagine that I had any other motive or object in proposing this delay, than the security of your happiness and my own. I only entreat you, Sydenham, not to be precipitate, but to reflect with me on the solemn and vital engagement upon which we would enter. Let us not incur it, before we have ascertained whether our tastes are alike, and whether the partiality which you now experience, I am sure with perfect sincerity, will stand the test of time, absence, and your mind being occupied with different pursuits. From what I have seen of you, I have no reason to doubt your steadiness, but we have known each other only in the country, and the habits of your past life have not been those to which you were accustomed in B—shire. Their only charm might be that of novelty, and farther experience might bring you to a true sense of the wearisomeness and ennui of such a life; it

is the only one, however, in which I could find satisfaction, and I am fully persuaded that I should be as incapable of administering to the happiness of a man of the world, as such a character would be unsuitable to me."

"True," I rejoined, "that I have been a man of the world; to the mere fact I must plead guilty, but I adopted that profession solely because I had nothing else to do. Most sincerely can I affirm that at no period have I followed such pursuits from the bent of my disposition; even in the most dazzling passages of my past career, my eyes have penetrated its delusive brilliancy, and my heart and soul have yearned after some condition of more solid and permanent felicity. When I saw you, and was admitted into your domestic circle, I felt that my dream was realized; life is short, and why should a year of happiness be sacrificed to the scruples of over fastidiousness. I implore you therefore not to press this point, but if you have any confidence in man, repose it in my sincerity and conviction of my own unchangeableness. Say at once that you will be mine,

and thus afford the best guarantee for both. You cannot be ignorant of your own surpassing qualities, and being conscious of them, you must think me as dull, and as hard as stone, could you doubt, that by their influence, I should be restored to just principles and right conduct, even were my heart corrupted, and my tastes depraved, which I devoutly hope you do not suspect them to be."

"Indeed, indeed I do not," cried Alice earnestly, and pressing my hand in the emphasis with which she disclaimed such a humiliating opinion. "Rather than that you should seriously suppose that it proceeded from doubt or indifference, I would abandon my proposal without another word."

"I cannot," answered I, "for one moment attribute it to such motives, even to redeem this year of endurance."

"That is kind—that is generous—it is what I should have expected from you, and does more to shake my resolution than any argument or persuasion you could offer: if I limit the

time, then, to six months, will you desist from farther opposition?"

"I am in your power, and you may prescribe to me what terms you please. The time you prescribe will seem to me an age, but I will yield to it without farther importunity; only let me pledge to you my devoted and eternal love?"

"No!" cried Alice, stopping me; "I will receive no such pledge; I utterly reject it! What! should I bind your honour to fulfil the engagement although your inclination might have ceased? Heaven forbid! it is to guard against such a possibility, and for no other reason, that I urge delay. In the mean time you are as free as air: if at the expiration of the period I have named, you should find a change in your present feelings, I adjure you candidly to say so; you will not lose one atom of my good opinion by such a frank acknowledgment; but should you, on the contrary, be actuated by a false notion of honour to fulfil your present intentions, with different feelings,

you will condemn both yourself and me to a life of misery."

"Well," I replied, "I am content to undergo this ceremony of probation, for it is nothing more as far as I am concerned. Of course, however, I must exact this same promise on your part with respect to me."

"I freely give it," answered Alice.

"May I not sometimes see you in this dreary interval?"

"Perhaps I do violence to my wishes in desiring that we should meet as seldom as possible," answered she with a smile which alone was sufficient to keep my love alive six months, "but I shall be glad to hear that you are mingling unreservedly with the world; indeed your public duties ought to occupy you during the greater part of that time."

CHAPTER XV.

WITH a gay heart did I leave Paulet's house on that memorable evening. All my doubts and anxieties were terminated ; I was placed beyond the reach of Fortune ; I did not foresee the possibility of her bringing about any event or concurrence of circumstances, which could embitter a moment of the future. My own life and that of Alice being spared, I saw nothing in the prospective but unmitigated happiness.

I hastened to communicate the particulars of my interview with Alice, to our mutual and deeply interested friend, Lady Eleanor Palmer. She was at her toilette when I was announced, but such was the eagerness of her anxiety to

know what had taken place, that she sent for me to her dressing-room, and dismissing her maid, immediately inquired for my intelligence. "But I see by your countenance," added she before I could speak, "that every thing has gone smoothly. You are the happiest of men, I am sure ; well, let me hear it all."

I then related to her nearly according to the details in the last chapter, all that had passed between Alice and myself. She congratulated me warmly, and expressed the highest admiration of the conduct of Alice. Rather for the sake of Lady Eleanor's vindication and renewed eulogies of her young friend, than to satisfy any real scruple of my own, I let fall some doubts, whether it did not imply too much temperance of feeling. "In fact," said I, "if she has any fault, don't you think that is the one?"

"Now you are too provoking ! Is it possible to please a person so utterly unreasonable, so ingeniously fastidious ? Highly as I estimate the generosity, delicacy, and devotion of my own sex, I scarcely think Alice's behaviour

under the circumstances could be surpassed. She is most deeply attached to you—that I know—yet she voluntarily, and in spite of yourself, gives you the fullest latitude, and thereby risks the loss of you, for how is it possible to have any reliance upon the insolence and caprice of so choice a gentleman as you are taught to consider yourself? Perhaps this is an over-refinement of generosity, for there is no reciprocity on her side; there is no danger that time will have any other effect upon her feelings than to confirm and strengthen them. Her only anxiety, then, during these six months will be for your constancy. And yet you are ungrateful and unjust enough to throw an imputation upon the motives which dictated such noble conduct. Sydenham, I have no patience with you—I had almost said you are unworthy of such a creature.”

Lady Eleanor had become warm, so I hastened to soothe her displeasure, by assuring her that I spoke unadvisedly, and that I fully appreciated the part which Alice had taken. She was appeased by this explanation, and observed

with truth, that it would argue me incapable of understanding the nature of a high and delicate mind, were I to doubt the motives which had influenced Miss Paulet in this affair. “I should despise myself,” I observed, “did I believe it possible that I could take advantage of her magnanimity. No, the six months’ probation which she inflicts, will only serve to render assurance doubly sure. I shall employ it, however, in cultivating better habits and feelings than those which, I am ashamed to say, have hitherto regulated my life; she did right, indeed, in allowing me some time to make myself a little more worthy of her.”

“Now,” said Lady Eleanor, “these dispositions are such as I should have expected from the better nature of Matthew Sydenham; the world only sees him in his least becoming aspect, and forms its hasty judgment from his faults, which, thank Heaven! are all on the outside. I know that you will eventually prove, both in public and private life, what your real friends and admirers wish to see you.”

Nor was the pleasure which Lady Jane

Paulet manifested at this fortunate event, less lively than that of her elder friend. She seemed, however, inclined to agree with me in thinking it hard, that the marriage should be deferred for six months. But accustomed as she was, to consider both her husband and his sister, perfect and infallible, she would not encourage me to persevere in pleading for a mitigation of the delay, although she did not altogether understand the necessity or expediency of it. In the fulness and simplicity of her heart, she disclosed to me how she had from the first wished for this match, as well from her own good opinion, as from perceiving her sister's predilection for me. She described the pleasure with which she had observed our growing intimacy, and the anxiety and alarm at the unaccountable change in my conduct. She had never suspected that I had regarded Axford as a rival, nor had she been made acquainted, until very lately, with the fact of his second proposal for Alice. Hence the indignation and disgust which she had displayed toward me, in consequence of ascribing the change

in my manner, to a design of sporting with the feelings of her sister—a practice to which she had only recently learned that I was addicted. The tenderness of her sex, and her own peculiar nature, were however deeply engaged for the disappointment of young Axford, whose returning attachment to Alice she had sometimes suspected, but had never entertained any serious apprehensions of it. I myself was not without commiseration for his condition, embittered, perhaps, by the consciousness that his rival excelled him in those qualities which found favour in the eyes of his mistress. George Axford was a most amiable young man, but his character was soft, and his intellect was certainly not above mediocrity. In fact he was not the sort of person to gain the regard of a girl of sense and spirit. It may be adding insult to unintentional injury, to say that I pitied him, but I regretted I should have so far given way to jealousy and contempt, as to have treated him slightly; and I wished for an opportunity of offering him my friendship. This the reader will probably say I might do without drawing much upon my magnanimity.

CHAPTER XVI.

By the desire of Alice, which was in conformity with my own wish, the knowledge of the relation in which we stood toward each other, was to be strictly confined to her own family and the Palmers. It is not very pleasant to go about town as a man engaged to be married: already had the rumour gone abroad somewhat to my annoyance. I determined, therefore, to give it no countenance, and if possible, to preserve the secret until a few days before the catastrophe.

Relieved from the anxious care which had deprived me of peace, and suspended my energies for some time past, I applied myself with alacrity and spirit to my several avocations.

I was necessarily occupied a good deal with politics, and rather in obedience to the injunction of Alice, than from any inclination of my own, I made my appearance occasionally in those gay assemblages, where I had formerly shone the satellite of Beaumont, and but a little less than himself in magnitude and brilliancy. If I had formerly regarded the *beau monde* with contempt, that feeling was certainly not mitigated by the contrast which it presented to the higher style of society, in which I had of late mingled. Naturally disposed to scorn, and having no longer any motive to restrain me from indulging that passion, (for so in me it might at one time have almost been denominated) my demeanour became more insulting, and my sarcasms more cold and cutting than ever. Alice did wisely in desiring me to come among these people, thought I; it is right that I should entirely disgust myself with them, in order that I may more thoroughly appreciate my future prospects.

What a bitter irony does that appear to a thinking man which affixes the epithet "good"

to the society of professional fashionables ! The world, as these classes affect to call themselves, is a living libel upon society ; for I will venture to say, that it comprises, in a greater degree than is to be found in any other description of the community, all that is base, odious, and contemptible in human nature. Insolence, ignorance, vulgarity, bigotry, envy, jealousy, vice, and meanness of every variety, are to be found there in greater abundance and perfection, than in any other given sect or class, or number of persons throughout the world. But, thank Heaven ! I have done for ever with the vile crew, whose characteristic it is to despise all who are not sots like themselves. Adieu, ye demireps, who are profligate, though ignorant of the refinements of passion ; ye tribe of Metcalfes, who sell your children for gold and glitter, and ye daughters who are eager to be sold ! Farewell, ye dandies, and a word with you at parting, for ye were once my humble servants. Ye are to me, who am wont to be proud of heart, what a death's head is to a hermit, or a physician to a man in health ; when-

ever I am disposed to think more highly of myself than I ought to think, I have only to reflect that I share the lineaments of humanity with such creatures as you, and my self-conceit is incontinently humbled. For the sake of old acquaintanceship I offer you a piece of advice. There is now in agitation a measure, the tendency of which is to produce revolution. Go down on your knees, and unceasingly pray that this measure may never pass into a law, for when the standard of utility is set up, (nay, it is already raised,) what will become of you? for I doubt whether you will be able to find a station in the Common Wealth sufficiently degraded for your reception, or employments base enough for your capabilities. Hope not at the day of reckoning that you will be suffered to take shelter in your utter insignificance, for perhaps the splendour of hereditary rank and honour may have been tarnished in your persons, or fortune may have enabled you to abuse the advantages of wealth, or perhaps under the shelter of station or public

tranquillity, you may have presumed to insult those, who, however humble, must be far superior to yourselves. A generous man may step out of his path to avoid injuring the worm, but when a crowd is pressing forward, the wretched insect must be crushed. It is true that in yourselves ye are nothing, but circumstances have enabled you to be a nuisance, and you must not expect that the passions of the many will discriminate between them and your personal insignificance. Were your miserable fates dependent solely on the master spirits of the scene, you might rest assured of passing unnoticed.

Tremble ye, all who have set up the goddess of Folly, and have devoted yourselves to the prostitute. The time is fast approaching when your vile superstition will no longer be tolerated. The spirit of improvement is advancing upon you, and ye must either yield to, or fly before it. There is a great cry abroad to set up the standard of merit, and expel the scoundrels and blockheads from the high

places of the world, which they have too long usurped to the exclusion of the rightful owners. These are no speculative predictions, but the palpable signs of the times, which he who runs may read.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE society into which I was thrown this year by my political connexions, differed materially in character from that of which I had been a member during the last session. It had less brilliancy than that of the Whig wits, but more solidity; and owing to the change that was gradually taking place in my tastes and habits, it had more substantial attractions for me, than the feverish excitement which marked the conversation of my former associates. My new friends were likewise for the most part worthy private characters, as well as able and honest in public life, and this was now a consideration to me. They were stigmatized by their showy opponents as humdrums, and I was

a good deal badgered at first, for my connexion with them, but this ridicule, like every other attempt at any period of my life to divert me from my settled purpose, passed by me like idle wind.

I shall not detail any conversation which took place at our dinners, for though they were always rational and interesting, and not without wit as well as wisdom, they chiefly related to politics, and therefore were of a nature not exceedingly palatable to my fair friends, who, I fear, are sadly disappointed, after all, by the unromantic style of my love affair, and the straight-forward matter-of-fact manner in which it is obvious it must end. I scorn indeed to deceive you by encouraging hopes of mystery and embarrassments which I cannot gratify. I feel myself already growing domestic and dull; the spell of matrimony is upon me, and Sydenham's occupation is gone!

My old friends, the Whigs, as I, who knew them well, had suspected, and as others who knew them still better, had more positively predicted, now began to show that they intended to pre-

serve the consistency of their character by relaxing their hold of that measure, their great and last resource, which, like Fox's India Bill, if carried, must have secured to them a long lease of office ; and if frustrated, must drive them disgraced, into another half century of desperate and impotent opposition. To persons who, like myself, are addicted to the study of man, it is delightful to observe this keeping in character. Had they, upon coming into power, behaved with decency and good-sense, I should have been disappointed. The country has invariably despised and distrusted them ; and this is no prejudice, but a judgment founded upon their conduct whenever they have been armed with power. They swagger and talk big, when their efforts are confined to empty bullying ; but give them place, and they aggravate their voices, and roar you in Bottom's vein. They have one vote for opposition, and another for office. The maxims of patriotism and liberty are ever upon their lips ; but their hearts and heads are far from both. They have nothing to do with either, except theoreti-

cally ; for their practice carries into extravagance and abuse the doctrines of Toryism, though with an effrontery which excites both one's laughter and indignation, they will tell you that they do not depart from their principles. They remind me of the ingenious philosopher Square, who dilates upon the 'beauty of virtue and the fitness of things,' and is found by his pupil *not* equivocally situated in a young lady's bedchamber. But is Square abashed by this discovery ? Not a jot ; for he can prove it to be perfectly consistent with the beauty of virtue and the eternal fitness of things. "True," says he, "I should have been unpardonable had I originally seduced the damsel from the paths of virtue ; but when I find the thing done, am I reprehensible for obeying the dictates of nature ? I cannot make the matter worse, for the ice was already broken before I came ; so that I have only acted in conformity to the eternal and immutable fitness of things." In like manner argue my quondam friends, when envy or malice would detect a discrepancy between their principles and their

professions. "What !" says the Whig minister, "am I to be blamed for giving to my own in preference to strangers? With whose merits should I be so well acquainted, as with those of my own kindred? and I protest that I know none better qualified to hold their several offices, than my sons, brothers, and cousins, whom I have respectively appointed to them. Who shall say, then, that I have not fully redeemed my pledge of giving only to the most worthy? True, I have clamoured for retrenchment; but if, instead of alleviating, I am obliged to add to the burdens of the country, am I to be loaded with reproaches? Consider, unreasonable man, the circumstances of the country, and lay the blame upon those who brought it into such circumstances, as to render retrenchment impossible *at present*. Therefore," &c. &c. Now this is reasoned in the very spirit of the notable philosopher, celebrated by our great national novelist, and I strongly suspect that Fielding must have intended that character as an allegorical representation of the Whigs. Never had the character of the party

been more satisfactorily developed and vindicated than by the present administration. With an effrontery, imbecility, and profligacy, which Whigs only could display in such prominent combination, they now, just before it was committed, signified their intention of dismembering that darling measure, upon preserving the integrity of which they had staked their personal honour, and what was of more importance, their official existence. But observe their first retrograde movement. At the commencement, they retreat in gallant style, with their faces to the enemy, at the same time stoutly denying, with ludicrous impudence, that they were retreating at all! In the beginning of the contest, they blustered about "victory or death!" and swore that they would not yield an inch of ground; now however, when they found the day going against them, their leader intimated that though he would adhere to his pledge of "no surrender," yet, should he be hard pressed upon any point he would allow it to be taken from him "*male pertinaci.*"

So much for the Whigs. As to their subsequent acts, are they not written in the chronicles? Yes, thank Heaven, they are to be found in imperishable records, otherwise I would give them a place here, for the benefit of posterity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE evening when there was to be a great debate, Alice was induced to make one of a party of ladies to the roof of the House of Commons. She had never before witnessed the assembly of our collective wisdom, and such was my opinion of her good sense, acuteness, and knowledge of the world, that I felt interested to know the result of her observation upon us. The debate which took place upon this occasion, brought out the principal characteristics of the House. It lasted for six hours, and comprised speakers of every description.

The next day I asked Lady Jane how she had been *entertained*?

“ Oh, very much, indeed,” was her reply. I expressed doubt from her manner, that she was quite sincere, and desired that she would say what she really thought.

“ Now you only want to make me say something silly, and then to despise me afterwards. I know it was all very clever, but I did not understand the question, and therefore could not appreciate it. I was like a shuttlecock during the whole time ; for every speaker on both sides, convinced me alternately that his opinion was right, which of course was very absurd.”

“ At all events, you can tell which speech pleased you most.”

“ I dare say my taste will be pronounced quite wrong,” answered she ; “ but if you will have it, I must say Lord M’s. Oh, it was so eloquent ! and his voice so melodious, and his attitudes so graceful ! I wonder how the House could bestow so much more applause on that long speech of Mr. H. who is as hoarse as a raven, and whose only action was thumping upon the box which stood on the table

before him. I see you are laughing at my opinion, but I have told you the truth, as you desired me."

It was true, indeed, that I could not suppress a smile at my fair friend's unsophisticated preference. Mr. H. whom she voted a bore, was one of the very few members of that House, who, I should say, emphatically, spoke with the tongue of a statesman, while this Lord M. was, perhaps, the most offensive specimen of that class of members whom Burke described as being "nursed and dandled into legislators;" a young man possessed of that sort of farthing rushlight glimmering of talent, which, when it exists in plebeian minds, rarely sheds its rays beyond the poet's corner of a provincial newspaper. But being found in the heir of a noble house, is fanned, and coaxed, and nourished, and then worshipped as a star of the light of Heaven. This Lord M. was, in fact, one of my especial disgusts—the most nauseous of all the "talented youth"—a creature trained to come down to the House and thrust out his arm, spout like a parrot, and play monkey tricks of

rhetoric. And then the complacency of the animal ! The ape's imitations of humanity are the only comparison I can find for M.'s caricatures of eloquence, and self-pride in his exhibitions. Not content with aspiring to the honours of a statesman, this genius must needs be an author likewise. Nothing less must serve his turn but tragedy, forsooth ! and a sad affair it was, indeed—too dull even for mirth ! In his lighter moods, however, he would condescend to indite rhymes, which were the veritable *eau sucré* of poesy. But the ladies, I believe, in general, thought very highly of him, and even my dear little friend, Lady Jane, who was by no means a fool, was likewise disposed to be one of his admirers. “ And are you also enchanted with Lord M.'s eloquence ? ” inquired I somewhat anxiously of Alice.

“ On the contrary,” answered she, “ Jane and I do not agree with respect to him. Lord M.'s object seemed to be to make a speech. Now I preferred those who appeared to address themselves earnestly to the question, with the view to persuade their audience. Lord M. gave

me the idea of a forward school-boy, who came forth with an oration in which he had perfected himself by frequent rehearsals."

"Well, I give him up," said Jane, "only I am sure it was intended to be all very fine, and so it imposed upon my ignorance."

"And what is your opinion of us upon the whole? Do you think we want reforming?"

"Indeed, I don't pretend to say," answered Alice; "that, perhaps, is best known to yourselves. But I should suppose that there is not, nor ever was, an assembly of the same size which included so much wisdom, information, and eloquence, with so small an average of ignorance and folly, as the English House of Commons. It is very imposing to witness almost every side of every question so powerfully advocated. Such spirit, such enthusiasm, such brilliant collisions of talent, form a noble spectacle to my eyes. I confess I did not like the assertion of that member, who, in replying to an argument, that the proposed measure would exclude talent from the House, said, that such an effect would be a recommendation to him,

because he thought that the description of persons alluded to, so far from being an acquisition, were well got rid of, for they only obstructed the public business."

"That member," I replied, "was the organ of his party; the drones and bores who make the longest speeches, and are the real impediments to the public business. It is very natural that they should wish to be free of their enemies and tyrants, of whom they stand in awe. If the House were not illumined by eloquence, it would be deprived of the essential part of that splendour and dignity, which excites the admiration, and preserves the respect of the nation; it would subside into a mere committee for the transaction of public affairs. But I utterly deny that men of great talent are merely ornaments of the House. Because their eloquence does not appear immediately to influence its decisions, shallow people cry out, 'What is the use of all this speaking? it is a waste of the public time.' These blockheads are incapable of reflecting that every view of every question is exhibited in the most forcible

light to the people of England, by the efforts of the leading members, who, through the medium of the press, are the source of public opinion, which is thus no other than their own wisdom reacting upon, and governing the legislature in a new form. Very few indeed are the minds capable of comprehending great questions, and were these left to be dealt with by ordinary intellects, what contempt would be excited by their feeble attempts to reach such inaccessible topics ! What a mass of temerity and prejudice would our legislature be, were not these besetting sins of ignorance and mediocrity counteracted by the light of genius and knowledge ! I do not hesitate to say, that no House of Commons would preserve the respect and confidence of the country many years, after being deprived of those lights, which all experience proves, can be safely and securely admitted only by means of the close boroughs. But this is no argument to the symmetry-mongers and noisy declaimers about the rights of man, who regard political institutions in much the same manner, as your sex generally estimate

ours—more studious of external grace and proportion, than intrinsic and practical worth.”

It must not be supposed that these remarks were addressed exclusively to the ladies, although I knew that they were of a description not uninteresting to Alice, who, however, had always the good taste to withdraw from all share in the conversation, when it grew decidedly political and argumentative. But, in fact, I was speaking rather to Paulet and Trefusis, who had just entered the room. The last-mentioned person had lately come into Parliament, having filled up the vacancy in Lord Truro's borough, occasioned by the death of Cheselden. I shall not detail any part of the conversation that followed; for political disquisitions are not the province of a work of this kind, and I fear that I have already trespassed too far beyond what can be properly considered legitimate ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

DIVIDED as my thoughts and time were just now between love and politics, nothing passed particularly worthy of record. It appeared, however, that I had not yet exhausted the world of absurdities; for, calling in Grosvenor-street one morning, Lady Jane informed me, with a countenance full of humour, that if my propensities for ridicule were languishing for want of a subject, they might meet with one if I would dine there that day. Before I could make any inquiry as to these promised lions, Alice, though not altogether able herself to suppress a smile, gently reproved her lively sister for stimulating my expectations on such a subject, and gave me to understand, that she

alluded to Lord Truro, his wife, and her family, who had just come to town, and were to dine with them that day.

“ I would rather,” said she, “ that you never saw them at all, but as that is scarcely possible, you may as well meet them to-day as any other time. The truth must be owned, that my uncle has made a very unsuitable match. Lady Truro and her family have, in fact, exceeded our expectations, which you know were not very favourable ; but I am sure I need not remind you that St. Leger would be annoyed by your appearing to notice their failings, upon which he has never made any remark even to us.”

“ I’m so glad, Alice; he was not in the room yesterday when they called,” said Jane, “ for I really could hardly keep my countenance. I’m afraid they must have observed the restraint I put upon myself.”

“ I don’t think you need suffer much remorse on that account,” answered her sister ; “ for fortunately, or unfortunately, I don’t know which to call it, persons whose defects

are very gross are seldom conscious of them, I believe ; but pray, my dear, be guarded for St. Leger's sake."

" Indeed I'll do my best, Alice, to be composed, but Mrs. Cleghorn is almost too much for human gravity. I only implore you, Sydenham, not to look towards me while they are here, for if you do I shall be quite overpowered."

" You teach me to anticipate something very delightful," said I. " Is there any other besides My Lady, and her mamma?"

" O yes !" cried Jane, with a look and tone of humorous horror ; " worse, if possible, remains behind ; there's a brother and sister."

" Indeed ! and what are they all like, in Heaven's name ?"

" Oh, I can give you no idea of them ; they must be seen and *heard*. But the mother is the best, or the worst, as I suppose Alice would say. They are all excellent and different. She is a perfect monster of vulgarity ; my aunt is *fine* ; the sister servile, and the

brother—I'm sure I hardly know what—a sort of dandy-savage."

"This is a rich treat indeed ; but Alice may be assured that I will enjoy it in silence."

"Do, pray. It is useless to defend them, for they are utterly absurd ; but St. Leger, you know, cannot pass them off as a jest."

Time was when I should have anticipated the exhibition of these originals with exquisite *gout* ; nor will I affect to say that my relish for such entertainments was materially diminished ; but I can safely assert, that I no longer permitted myself recklessly to inflict pain upon persons who were unfortunate by nature or education. In baiting folly or affectation, however, I had as keen an enjoyment as ever.

With the lively expectation, therefore, of being a good deal amused, from the description that Jane had given me of these people, I returned to dinner in Grosvenor-street. I found the Truro party already in the drawing-room, and it was with obvious difficulty that Lady Jane could summon sufficient self-command to

introduce me to them. They were indeed a deplorable set. The Marchioness herself was distinguished from the other members of her family by the extra richness of her dress. She evidently did not sit easy under her new honours, not indeed from want of self-confidence, but because she had just discrimination enough to perceive that the sphere of society into which she had been raised was exceedingly different from that which she had quitted. The mother was indeed a monster—a huge mass of disgusting mortality, so gross as to be beyond ridicule, and to turn one's stomach. The sister, Miss Penelope Cleghorn, was a good specimen of a low Irish Miss, dressy, forward, and vulgar. The brother was a most outrageous creature. Sir Patrick Molony, Beaumont's favourite baronet, was a fool to him. The Baronet was unsophisticated, he assumed nothing, but here was a grotesque and spurious kind of dandyism engrafted upon the native animal. At first I did not know what to make of him, but after some observation, I discovered his object:—it was to be a beau. Jane's descrip-

tion of him was, I believe, the best—a dandy-savage.

Lord Truro was such a very gentleman-like person—he had so much of *the Paulet* in his manner, that any one who was ignorant of mankind would have been at a loss to understand how he could have connected himself with such a set; but, accustomed as I was every day to witness the most incongruous alliances, to me there was nothing very astonishing in this affair. Lord Truro had in his youth been much admired for his grace and beauty; it appeared that this was peculiarly his weak side, and I was not long in discovering that he had not otherwise much strength to guard against any attacks made thereupon. These people had, no doubt, a sufficiency of low cunning; he was alone, and advanced in life; they had of course laid siege to him with a storm of flattery, and he probably became an easy conquest.

Paulet, however, treated them with perfect courtesy; his beautiful and graceful wife, for his sake, bore with them; and Alice, always

correct and considerate, was not deficient in attention. At first they were rather cowed by the consciousness of their being so entirely out of place, but, after a time, native impudence relieved them from this embarrassment, and they shone forth in their real colours.

I need, perhaps, scarcely say that there was no addition to the party at dinner, for Paulet had too much respect for his uncle and his own family, to invite any stranger to laugh at his new connexions.

These dreadful people could not eat their dinner even, without betraying the beast. They all fed with the knife, except when a sudden recollection, or a significant look from Lord Truro would remind either of them of instructions, which it was obvious, from such glances, that they had received beforehand, with respect to their behaviour, but habit in general asserted its predominance. The old woman, indeed, seemed quite incorrigible, for she used the weapon aforesaid with such rash security, that Lady Jane cast a half-fearful glance at me as Mrs. Cleghorn drew the blade from her mouth,

lest she should cut herself from ear to ear; but of this there was no apprehension, for the old lady had too much practice. I should be suspected of exaggeration were I to detail all the irregularities of the parent savage, but I shall never forget the astonished countenance of the servant, when she asked for "A cut of bread, young man." As for Jane, she was obliged to put her handkerchief to her mouth, and even Alice could with difficulty suppress a smile; her son-in-law blushed, but Paulet was imperturbable. Fortunately I could always preserve a perfect command over my features.

Dinner ended, and the ladies withdrawn, the savage, who had been rather *shy* in the presence of Jane and Alice, began to evince a desire of taking a lead in the conversation. Politics being the theme of the day, Lord Truro made some indifferent remarks relative thereto; the savage uttered a contrary opinion with such fierceness of language, as must almost have been considered personal, had it proceeded from an individual acquainted with and amenable to the laws of good breeding. No notice being taken

of what he said, he proceeded in the same style, until Lord Truro, provoked and ashamed at the outrageousness of the creature, found it expedient to take upon himself the office of keeper, and rebuked him in sharp terms, which caused the following rejoinder.—

“Sure, I’m only expressing my opinion, my Lord, and there’s no *harrum* in that. I’d like to know what gentleman would say the contrary?” he added with an air of defiance.

“I fear, Sir,” observed I, “that this country is not quite so free as that fortunate island of which you are a native. I fancy many things might be both said and done there which would not be tolerated here.”

“Mr. Cleghorn,” said Paulet, “I’ll trouble you to pass the white wine.”

The savage did as he was requested, at the same time looking rather bewildered, as if he did not understand what I said, and therefore suspected that it contained material for a quarrel.

“Divil take me, if I know!” answered he resolutely, after a pause; “but I’ll spake my

opinion out manfully wherever I may be, that will I, 'faith, for I'm afraid of no man."

Lord Truro blushed with shame and anger, and without taking any farther notice of his untamed connexion, proposed that we should join the ladies, and left the room. I followed his example, and as I went up stairs I heard the savage behind murmuring and menacing audibly at the disrespectful treatment he had met with.

What passed further that evening I know not, for having spoken a word to Alice, I went down to the House.

CHAPTER XX.

THE reader will easily believe, that my desire to become acquainted with the anonymous writer who had made such a malignant attempt to mar the happiness of Alice and myself had, now that his base design was exposed and frustrated, dwindled into a mere matter of curiosity. I had set it down in my own mind as proceeding rather from petty female malice than deliberate villainy, and in fact, had nearly forgotten the circumstance, when I was reminded of it by an occurrence, which I must relate.

I was walking one day through an obscure street in the neighbourhood of Marylebone, when I perceived on the opposite side of the

way, a little in advance of myself, a person whose appearance attracted my particular attention. The profile of this man strongly resembled my uncle, although the lip was free from the moustaches, which the latter had worn when he left Sydenham ; the dress was shabby, as if with a view to disguise, but the step and mien could hardly be mistaken. That I might observe without being observed, I slackened my pace, and crossed over to the same side with the stranger. I followed him quietly, until he turned down a street to the right, but in so doing, he cast behind a glance which was arrested by my person, for on seeing me, he suddenly hurried forward. This movement confirmed my suspicion ; I pressed after him, but upon turning into the street where he disappeared, I found that I had lost him. He must have gone into one of the houses, and my first impulse was to call at each, and inquire if such a person lodged there. But upon consideration, I abandoned this purpose, which, if successful, could be productive of no probable effect, for how could I speak to my scoundrel

relative, or what excuse could I make for concerning myself in his affairs? Nevertheless I felt exceedingly desirous to know what he was doing in London, where he was evidently *incog*. That it boded no good, to myself especially, I could not but feel a strong presentiment, and the anonymous letter immediately recurred to me. While at Sydenham he frequently betrayed the strongest repugnance to the idea of my marrying, and never omitted an opportunity of endeavouring to create in me a contempt and abhorrence of the blessed condition of matrimony, to which, in the abstract, I certainly had no great inclination.

Instead, therefore, of calling at every house on a fool's errand to inquire if Mr. Sydenham lodged there, I contented myself with taking the name of the street and sending for one of the ferrets of the police, whom I had in my pay, having sometimes occasion to employ him for political purposes. To this ferret, whom I knew to be vigilant, faithful, and persevering, I communicated certain particulars relative to a certain person, desiring him to obtain all pos-

sible information respecting the present situation, proceedings, connexions, and views of that person. My trusty ferret nodded and winked, asked no unnecessary question, and promised to use dispatch and his best talents in this service.

In a few days, my emissary reported progress. The individual was living in a house of bad reputation. He occupied the first floor, and underneath was a low hell. He passed by the name of Bayley. His principal associates, according to the observations of my spy, were a foreigner, and a young man of the name of Burgess, who lived in Craven Street, Strand. I was startled by the latter name, and desired a particular description of the owner's person. He was tall, raw-boned, and confident in his address; a cocked-up nose, greenish eyes, straight black hair, and sallow complexion; age twenty or thereabouts. This description exactly corresponded with my friend the vicar's son!

My determination was instantly taken. I had promised Burgess to take some notice of

his son in London : this promise, my engagements had hitherto afforded me no opportunity of performing, which I fully intended, from respect and regard for the old man. I should, therefore, have a good excuse for calling at the young gentleman's lodgings.

I paid him a visit accordingly, but was told that he was not within. In the evening I sent to invite him to dinner the following day. He came, and nothing was more obvious, as there were but few topics in common between us, than that I should turn the conversation upon himself and his pursuits. To all my inquiries, his answers were of such a kind as to give me to understand that he was almost exclusively devoted to his studies. It required but little penetration to see that the lad was playing the hypocrite. His raw, low cunning could hardly deceive me. I had considerable difficulty, nevertheless, in coming to the point, at which I was aiming, without alarming his suspicions, if there was any thing wrong, as was most probable, in his connexion with my uncle. In the first place I was not informed

whether he knew him as my relative, or only under his assumed name of Bayley. My second difficulty was how to extract from him any thing farther than a confirmation of the fact of his acquaintance with that person. I affected to take a great interest in his concerns, desired to know who were his companions, and what were their characters? Accordingly they were enumerated and described, with rather more freedom, than he had as yet permitted himself, which I attribute to the familiarity of my manner, and the wine with which I had pressed him. Still not a word about this Bayley, so that after *pumping*, and *beating about the bush*, as the phrase is, I was obliged to give up the hope of making him explicit. I dismissed him therefore with a token of my regard in the shape of a bank note for 20*l.* which the young man pocketed with much alacrity.

Although I had thus failed in my attempt to draw out young Burgess, I did not consider my interview with him to have been altogether unavailing, for as he had professed to give me an account of all his connexions in London, the

silence which he had preserved with respect to Bayley or Sydenham, in whichever character he might know him, was a convincing proof that there was something sinister in his connexion with that individual. Indeed, what object could such a man as my uncle propose to himself, in associating with this lad, but mischief? I cross-examined my spy upon the subject, and he persisted in his former report, which left no doubt upon my mind as to the identity both of Burgess and my uncle. I instructed the man, therefore, to continue his observations upon the proceedings of these individuals, and especially those of the latter.

A few days after the above detailed discovery, an incident occurred which I could not but consider closely connected therewith. I had gone to the play to see a new actress of celebrity, and was sitting on the back bench when a man in moustaches, looking like a foreigner, entered the box, and, in seating himself, brushed down my hat, which was beside me. Although he made no apology for the accident, it never occurred to me to suspect that

he meant to be impertinent, and therefore I quietly lifted my hat, and replaced it. Occupied with the business of the stage, I had forgotten this incident, and the presence of the person who had occasioned it, when Colonel Trefusis, who had accompanied me to the theatre, and sat just before me, requested that I would keep his place while he was absent for a few minutes. Accordingly I laid my hat upon his seat, but no sooner had he left the box, than the stranger aforesaid put his leg over the bench, and made a motion going to remove my hat, with the view to place himself in his stead. I informed him with perfect civility that the seat was engaged by my friend, who was returning to it immediately. "There is no keeping seats here," answered the man rudely, and in a foreign accent, at the same time displacing my hat.

"What the rule of the place may be, Sir, I know not," was my reply, "but the rule of courtesy which prevails among gentlemen would protect my friend's place from intrusion during his temporary absence. If you are not amena-

ble to that rule, I suppose I cannot prevent you taking possession of the unoccupied seat." So saying, I removed my hat.

"What, Sir!" cried the man, "do you mean say I am no the gentleman?"

"I don't know what you are," I replied, "but judging from your behaviour, I should suppose that you are not a gentleman."

The fellow here said something very scurrilous, which put a stop to the altercation, and a gentleman, sitting in front, who had observed what had taken place, said that the fellow ought to be turned out of the box, and begged that I would not think of taking notice of his insolence, as he had no doubt that he was a blackguard.

These proceedings were beginning to attract notice, so I handed my card to the gentleman who had interposed, and desiring the foreigner to follow me if he had any thing to say, I quitted the box. They both took the hint, and followed me into the lobby, where we were met, much to my satisfaction, by Colonel Trefusis. The gentleman aforesaid, who had

handed me his card in exchange for mine, then detailed what had taken place, and put it to Trefusis, whether this person was entitled to the treatment of a gentleman. My friend concurred with him in deciding that no notice could be taken of him. Hereupon the foreigner began to bluster, and talk about posting and horsewhipping, when Trefusis cut him short by saying—

“Produce a certificate that you are a gentleman, and Sir Matthew Sydenham shall give you the satisfaction of one. Refer me to any person of station in society who will vouch for your respectability, and you shall be dealt with accordingly!”

The man now *lowered his tone to one of high indignation*. Produce a certificate! Refer, indeed! He would not condescend to any such things. He was a gentleman, and could adduce proof enough if he thought it worth his while. He had been infamously used. So speaking, and muttering threats, he walked away in great heat.

“I wonder who the divil the fellow is, and

what was his maning in attempting to pick a quarrel with you?" said my stranger friend, who took occasion to inform us that he was an Irish gentleman, and that he had come up to town upon business: "I've a notion that I've seen his face before, and that, too, not in a very reputable place."

I requested him to be more explicit, and accordingly he frankly confessed that he had a strong recollection of having seen this very person in a gambling house in ——— Street, Marylebone, into which he had been tempted a few nights before, "where," said he, "I lost my good seventy pounds to one of the most gentlemanly looking fellows, that ever lived by his wits." I eagerly inquired what sort of a person?

"Why, do ye know any thing of him? 'Faith, begging your pardon for making such a comparison, I don't know but he had a look of yourself, Sir Matthew, though he was taller and older-looking."

This was, no doubt, my uncle; I did not, however, choose to acknowledge that I knew any

thing of such a person, so I evaded his inquiry, and thanking him for his friendly interposition, wished him good evening, professing my intention to take an early opportunity of paying him my respects.

CHAPTER XXI.

I HAD now gathered a train of circumstances, which clearly implied a design on the part of my uncle to annoy, at least, if not to do me serious mischief. That the anonymous letters, which had for their object the breaking off the supposed match between Miss Paulet and myself, emanated from him, I had now no doubt; he had always evinced a strong repugnance to the idea of my marrying, although in the course of nature, he had no right to expect to derive any benefit from my continuing a bachelor. The person who had attempted to engage me in a quarrel at the theatre, and the foreigner, whom my spy had observed in the company of Mr. Sydenham,

were evidently identical. It was not unreasonable to infer that this man had been employed by him to insult me with the view of hazard-ing my life, for of what iniquity was not my uncle capable? He was as pretty a villain as ever figured in tragedy or romance.

To sit down passively under this annoyance, and even bodily apprehension, was not possible, but it was difficult to decide upon any method of releasing myself from it. After some consideration I thought it as well to proceed in a straightforward manner, and accordingly I wrote my uncle the following letter.

“MR. BAYLEY,

“YOU will immediately know who the writer of this is, as well as he knows who you are. I have had my eye upon you for some time, and am acquainted with as many of your proceedings as would enable me to deal with you in a summary and effectual manner, but you will easily understand my disinclination to expose you publicly, unless your machinations against myself personally, (of all which, direct

or indirect, I am perfectly aware,) should oblige me to resort to that final measure. I appeal to you by your self-interest, through which alone you are accessible, whether you can propose to yourself any safe and probable advantage by pursuing your present course? You cannot benefit yourself by injuring me. Should you even take my life, (such is my opinion of your talents, I believe you might accomplish it, without appearing to be connected with the murder,) I should leave behind me documents which would deprive you of the object to be gained by my death. Be governed then by reason. Quit this country immediately, and for ever, and my agent shall receive directions to pay to yours the sum of two hundred pounds half-yearly, *during my life, and your continuance abroad.* Understand that I propose this as an alternative to public disgrace and irretrievable ruin.

“ You cannot deceive me. That you may have well-grounded confidence in your own abilities I admit, but you know likewise, that you have not a fool to deal with. This will be

delivered to you by a sure hand. I give you twenty-four hours for your answer, which if I receive not within that time, I shall interpret your silence as a refusal of my offer, and an acceptance of the alternative, and take measures accordingly, forthwith. M. S."

Notwithstanding the firmness with which this letter was written, I felt exceedingly anxious about its effect. Relying upon the terrors which his guilty conscience would conjure up, and upon his knowledge of the firmness of my character, I had talked big about evidence which, in point of fact, I did not possess, and even had it been within my reach, I should have felt extremely reluctant to take advantage of it, for it is not pleasant to proclaim one's father's brother as an infamous scoundrel.

On the following morning, soon after breakfast, I was informed that a person of the name of Hawkins wished to speak with me upon business, which he could only communicate to myself. Though unacquainted with the name announced, visits from strangers were not so

unusual with me as to excite suspicion, and I desired that the man should be shown in. Accordingly, a person shabbily dressed, with fierce red hair and prodigious whiskers of the same hue, was ushered into the room. As soon as the servant had retired, the stranger, whose full face had not been yet presented to me, turned round, and by an act of legerdemain, as it appeared, was instantly divested of his red hair and whiskers, and stood confessed,—my uncle!

Had Mr. Hawkins turned out to be Satan, I do not think that I should have been so very much terrified; for I have an idea, that there is a good deal of ill-nature prevalent about the Devil, and that he is, upon the whole, rather a good sort of fellow; but here stood before me a mortal man, who, as far as my experience went, had gone to the utmost extent of iniquity that his human nature would permit, and who seemed to unite in himself, all the qualities, which popular prejudice ascribes to the personage above-mentioned.

I will confess it then, I certainly did recoil, when I suddenly found myself in the pre-

sence of Colonel Sydenham ; but such emotions with me are transient ; I soon recovered myself sufficiently to express in terms, my surprise and displeasure at his appearance.

“ You have,” said I, “ exceeded my expectations. I never could have dreamed that your effrontery would bring you voluntarily and unnecessarily to face me. My letter required a written answer, and that alone will I receive ; so pray resume your hair and whiskers and retire, for I will hold no personal conference with you.”

“ Believe me I did not come here to trifle, or to be trifled with,” returned he, “ nor should I ever wantonly come across you ; but your letter, Matthew, requires my personal answer, and that alone shall it have.” So saying, with an air of cool determination he seated himself.

“ I tell you, I’ll have nothing to say to you personally ; begone, or I’ll disgrace you before the servants.”

My uncle’s cadaverous face grew more deathly white at these words, and he rose from his chair, but instead of moving towards

the door, stepped close up to myself, and, plucking his hand from his bosom, thrust at my face ; but involuntarily drawing my head back from the meditated blow, as I supposed, I found myself covered by a very small pistol, held about six inches from my face, on the full cock, and my uncle's tremulous finger hovering upon the hair trigger, in a manner which put me into a cold sweat.

" Attempt to move, or make any cry, and I will blow your brains to hell !" said my uncle, in a vehement whisper.

" What is your purpose ? Do you intend to commit murder ? What do you mean ?"

" Surrender those documents in your possession, by which you say you are enabled to blast my character. Give them up, or I'll be the death of you."

" Well, take away that pistol, and we'll see what's to be done. Don't attempt to humbug me with any nonsense about blowing my brains out, though in your nervous state, your finger may touch the trigger. You are not such a fool as to swing, for the mere sake of revenge."

My uncle lowered the instrument of death, and returned it to the half-cock.

“ I do not want your blood,” said he, “ but you know not, neither do I, what a desperate man may be hurried into ; so don’t trifle with me, Matthew. I’m in that state of mind and circumstances, that I CANNOT be trifled with. Give me those documents, and I will communicate with you, by letter, with respect to the other matters.”

“ The documents you require are not in my actual possession ; they are only available, in case of necessity.”

“ Matthew, I can depend upon your word ; give me your honour that you will procure and surrender them to me without reserve.”

“ I shall promise nothing of the kind ; you are losing labour. Those evidences shall never be forthcoming, if you behave yourself, and I solemnly assure you that I will never breathe a syllable of your conduct to me in particular, or against your character in general, provided you quietly quit the country, and accept the offer I made you. I will allow you 400*l*.

a-year, and give you 1000*l.* in ready money ; so let us have no more of these tragedy antics of pistols and daggers ; and pray let me be relieved from your farther presence as quickly as possible."

Colonel Sydenham paused a few seconds.

"Make the one thousand ten, and the four hundred five, and I will never see you again."

I hesitated at first at this exorbitant demand, but, upon a moment's reflection, I thought it better to acquiesce, and get rid of him.

"You know," I replied, "that I care little about money, and therefore you fancy that you may press me with confidence upon this point. However, I consent. I shall immediately forward for your signature an instrument, by which I bind myself to allow you 1000*l.* per annum as long as you continue abroad. The sum of 1000*l.* I will give you in hand, but not a shilling more. This is my ultimatum ; I will have no farther negotiation with you of any kind."

Colonel Sydenham attempted to remonstrate,

but I repeated my irrevocable determination with such an air, as gave him to understand that it was in vain to expostulate. Accordingly he re-assumed his disguise, and took his leave, to my infinite satisfaction.

CHAPTER XXII.

I LOST no time in transmitting to my uncle the instrument referred to in the last chapter. The document was returned, in like manner, without delay, with his signature duly affixed thereto, and accompanied by a note, in which the writer informed me that he took his farewell of London that evening, and that he quitted English ground for ever, by the first packet that sailed after he reached Dover. He *apologized* (for the haughty and indifferent language which he used, could scarcely be considered an expression of contrition) for the trouble he had given me, and assured me that I might be free from all apprehension in future, as I should never be reminded of his existence, except by the half-

yearly demands of his agent upon my banker. There was no tone of hostility in the letter, neither was there any attempt to excuse his conduct. It was altogether heartless and hardened.

Relieved as my mind now was of apprehension from this quarter, I perceived no obstacle to my happiness, except the period of time which was to intervene before my union with Alice.

It was about a month after the circumstances recently detailed, that I was walking in Piccadilly, when whom should I meet, but Burgess the worthy vicar!

“My good friend!” I exclaimed with unrestrained surprize, “can I believe my eyes? what in the name of common-sense has brought you to town?”

The good man returned my greeting with kindness, but his manner was singularly dejected and embarrassed. His dress, likewise, which was never remarkably spruce, was as disordered as his countenance. His black quaint clothes were covered with dust, his

linen was abominable, and his beard showed like a field of corn newly reaped. He was that sort of figure, which sharpers, at a glance, mark for their own. He strode manfully on, however, unconscious of the stares which his extraordinary appearance drew upon him from the passers, many of whom stopped, and looked round to laugh at him.

When he came up to me, the poor man seemed ready to sink with exhaustion. He took off his queer canonical-quaker hat, and with the red handkerchief contained in the crown thereof, wiped away the filthy consistence which perspiration had formed with dust in his furrowed features. This done, he was proceeding to enter into a detail of his business in London.

Now, though I hope and believe I am freer from folly than most men, and though from the high rank which I held in the gay world, I could do things, which less distinguished persons dared not venture upon, it certainly does require large philosophy, considerable strength of mind, and great *power*, to talk to, far more to

walk with, a quiz, in the height of the season, at the hour of four P.M., the scene being that confluence, where St. James's-street and Bond-street pour their tributary streams into Piccadilly. Much, therefore, as I respected and esteemed the excellent clergyman, I would that we had met at any other time, and in any other place, or that we had never met. My first impulse was, I am ashamed to confess, to disengage myself from him forthwith. But by a struggle I overcame this weakness — "Is it worthy," thought I, "of the friend of Paulet, and the betrothed of his sister? No; I will be great," and to guard against the possibility of relapse, I thrust my arm at once, and boldly within that of Burgess. To my dismay, he led me round the corner of Bond-street.

"Stop!" cried I, suiting the action to the word, "where the devil are you going? I had not bargained for this."

"I am going to King-street, Marylebone," answered the poor innocent.

"This is Bond-street, St. James's, my good friend, for Heaven's sake don't come here."

So saying, and without farther parley, I forced him into a hackney-coach, jumped in myself, and desired the man to drive to the place that Burgess had mentioned.

Being thus in a place of safety, I could unaffectedly express my pleasure at seeing the good vicar, and inquire, with real concern, how long he had been in London, and what had brought him there.

“ I travelled all last night, my dear Sir Matthew,” was his reply, “ and I have been walking about all day.”

“ I hope upon no unpleasant business ?” said I, attentively perusing his countenance, in which, dirt and fatigue seemed to be blended with care. He answered in the negative, but his manner denied the assertion.

“ Oh, no, it is nothing unpleasant ; I can’t say that it is any thing agreeable either ; my poor boy has not been going on quite so steadily as I could wish, but he ’s a mere child ; I ’m an old fool ; it was to be expected.”

“ Have you seen your son ?”

He had not. He had called at his lodgings

in the Strand, whither he had repaired immediately upon quitting the coach, but had been informed there, that the young gentleman had removed to the street in Marylebone to which we were driving. He had then gone to the office of the special pleader, where he had understood that his son was prosecuting his profession, but there he was told, to his surprise, that no such person was known. This puzzled him extremely, and he made every conjecture but the only one which a less partial and more practised person would have suggested. He had been warned by a friend, whose eye had been upon his son, that the young man was not going on quite right, and recommended him to come up without loss of time. The letter containing this alarming intelligence, had been received on Wednesday, and accordingly the good man, in the greatest anxiety, though he would not admit that he had any probable cause for it, had put himself into the coach the same evening, and upon arriving in London, had proceeded immediately, without taking any refreshment, in search of his son. Mr. Burgess was

a stranger in London, and had been walking about in all directions after the street in which his son lived, having evidently been misdirected by the people of whom he had inquired his way. The poor man could now hardly speak from fatigue and hunger, and the anxiety of hope deferred. In vain I tried to persuade him to stop a few minutes at a cook's shop and recruit his exhausted nature. He declared he could neither eat nor rest until he had seen his son.

On being set down at the house, which was in a shabby, suspicious-looking street, the woman who opened the door, answered our inquiry, whether Mr. Burgess lived there, with a hesitating affirmative, but would not say whether he was at home or not, until she went to see. The father's impatience could not await her return, so we followed her up stairs, until she halted at the second floor, and we entered the room before our harbingeress could do much more than announce the names, which my single-minded companion had given, before

I could suggest to him the expediency of withholding them.

Our unexpected presence was evidently anything but welcome. Before we made our appearance, I could overhear the hurried whisper and the confusion which the announcement had caused, and the young man had scarcely time to pull an open book before him, and throw himself into a position of deep study, before we entered. In his haste, he had opened the book at the wrong end: this little mistake was, however, observed, I believe, only by myself. But a pack of dirty cards which he had in his precipitation thrust behind the cushion of a still dirtier sofa, was too palpable to escape notice, as likewise were an empty bottle, a card upon the table inscribed "Miss Belinda St. Clair, 21, Frith-street, Soho," and other signs of low debauchery.

Our youth, however, who was gifted with considerable powers of impudence, was perfectly composed in his own person; indeed, he affected to be so much absorbed by the topsy-

turvy volume which was spread before him, that he was not, for a moment, conscious of our presence, when lifting his eyes with an expression of astonishment and delight, (under cover of which he snatched up a letter which lay upon the table, and dexterously conveyed it into his pocket,) ran to embrace his father, from whose eyes the tears fell fast as he clasped his darling to his breast, uttering only the affectionate epithets, "My dear, dear child!" It was a minute or two before the outpourings of affection were over, and the doting parent returned to a sense of the cause which had brought him to London. He then adverted to it, mildly diluting every strong term he used with some word of kindness, although he had promised, in conformity with my advice, to speak roundly on the subject. The cunning lad saw his father's weakness, and took diligent and dexterous advantage of it. He acknowledged, with a fair semblance of contrition, that he had been thoughtless and imprudent, and that he had spent more money than he ought, but this arose from his ignorance of London, and an erroneous estimate of

his expenses, but he would in future be strictly frugal, for he could never forgive himself for distressing his father.

“ Say no more about it, my boy,” answered his father, “ but let me know how much you are in debt, and I will pay it to the last shilling; you shall not want, Tom, if I sell the coat off my back. I knew,” added he exultingly, “ I should find you at home, and hard at study, though they would have persuaded me that you were deceiving your poor father; but I knew you could not deceive me,—could you, Tom?”

Here Tom protested, and his father took up the book, with which his son had professed to have been engaged, when we so suddenly broke in upon his privacy.

“ Why, what have we here, child?—this is no law-book, surely?” cried Mr. Burgess with some surprise, after having put on his spectacles and examined the volume; “ The Memoirs of the Chevalier Faublas!”

“ O no, sir,” answered the young man, with a face as red as fire, for though he might gull

his father, he knew that he could not overreach me, "it is a trumpery novel, I suppose—I don't know what. They gave it to me at the circulating library where I occasionally get books, at a penny the volume, being advised to read something light now and then, by way of relaxation from my severer studies."

"Oh, very right, very proper, there can be no possible objection to that," returned the good vicar, laying down the book, with the infamous notoriety of which he was evidently unacquainted. But I took care to give the young gentleman a significant look, and his eye quailed beneath mine.

Burgess then asked his son to explain how it was that they had denied all knowledge of him at Mr. Price's, the pleader's, where he had called. Mr. Thomas, who was always ready, answered that there were several Prices in the law, and that, from his description, it was evident he had gone to the wrong person. The Price to whom he belonged, was just then in the country, having been summoned to the death-bed of his mother. Strange to say, this

account was satisfactory. What passed farther at this interview, I cannot say, for finding myself *de trop*, I took my leave, Burgess having promised to call on me the following day, being obliged to leave London on Saturday, that he might be ready to attend to his professional duties, on the ensuing Sabbath.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE share of this life's care and disappointment which had fallen to the lot of poor Burgess, was one that came home keenly to his heart. He was destined to experience the acute misery of having a thankless and worthless child. He called upon me the following day, before he had been acquainted with the worst part of his misfortune. He had then ascertained that his son's business must necessarily detain him in London, and therefore with great reluctance, and for the first time since he had been entrusted with it, he was obliged to delegate his sacred duties, during his absence, to a stranger. The heartless and profligate youth had contracted debts to the amount of

between three and four hundred pounds, which he knew that his father could not discharge without subjecting himself and his other children to long and cruel privations. Notwithstanding, the good man was determined to answer these demands, at whatever sacrifice. "He would not suffer a stigma to attach to his boy, just entering upon life; he would pay the money, and he owned that what grieved him more even than Tom's great improvidence was, his suggesting to him that there were no legal claims for the debts, he being a minor, when they were contracted. But this was a mere thoughtless expression; he knew that his son's sentiments were not of that description. He had been very improvident certainly, but he was very young, and London was a very wicked place. He only humbly prayed God, that his boy's heart was not corrupted, and he was sure it was not; this lesson just setting out in life, might be an awful warning to, and the salvation of him. After all, no blame could attach to the boy; it was his fault for launching his youth and inexperience amid the dan-

gerous shoals of London. It was his folly to expect impossibilities. But he would take him back to the country for a year or two, and then he would be older and wiser, and his principles would be confirmed. It always so turned out in every transaction of life from the highest to the lowest, he had remarked, the more haste the worse speed. The boy was young enough ; there would be no time lost."

Thus did the good man extract consolation from his misfortunes. I strongly applauded his intention of withdrawing his son immediately from London, and compelled him to accept a draft upon my banker for the amount of his son's debts. I do not mention this out of ostentation, for every favour is to be estimated according to the value you place upon it ; and I never regarded money, in any other point of view, than a means. At the same time, my habits though liberal were not extravagant, and as my expenses had always fallen considerably short of my income, I had a good deal of ready money, which enabled me occasionally to do things like the present, somewhat, I must own,

to my inward satisfaction, although, as my incomparable Alice said, there is no unbecoming self-praise in assuming freedom from any vice, which want of benevolence is to be considered. Therefore, when I had money for which I had not even any personal use, however small might be the merit of appropriating it to the need of a fellow creature, great would have been the baseness of withholding it. Burgess, who had no worldly pride, after hesitating a little from a sense of delicacy, gladly and gratefully accepted my reiterated offer, and I had the gratification of dismissing the worthy soul with a cheerful countenance, and a light heart.

This feeling, however, as the reader, from what has already been disclosed respecting young Burgess, must expect me to add, was of short duration. He soon discovered that his son had been practising a system of duplicity, and a series of knaveries, which could be suggested only by a naturally bad, and utterly depraved disposition. Among various other deceptions and villanies, he found to his deep dismay, that the money, which in his fondness

and single-minded confidence he had entrusted to the young man to gain him admittance to the pleader's office, in which he was to learn his profession, had been otherwise appropriated ! Thus was the mystery of Mr. Price's ignorance explained. But worse remains behind. The old man had called to pay his respects to the Paulets ; and Lady Jane, who was the only one in the family he saw, told him of my intended marriage with her sister-in-law, and the whole history of that business, not omitting the anonymous letters which were in her possession, and which she showed him. *What was his horror, when in these documents he recognized the handwriting of his son !* He examined them minutely, over and over again, with agonized attention, but every particular confirmed his sense of the dreadful truth. Lady Jane, shocked at what she had unwittingly done, and overpowered by the spectacle of the misery, which this astounding discovery had produced, could only weep bitterly. It was long before this relief was afforded the unhappy old man. He laid down the dreadful letters, she said,

and covering his face with his hands, groaned as if his spirit was about to quit his body, and after a long interval, the tears rolled slowly down his cheeks. The dear, kind-hearted Jane described with glistening eyes, the old man's grief as the most affecting sight she had ever witnessed; and it was with difficulty, that I could persuade her out of the remorse which she felt for having been the innocent means of making him acquainted with his misfortune.

The last mentioned fact I first learned from Lady Jane, some days after Burgess had communicated to me the pecuniary embarrassments of his son. Not having seen him in the interval, I had concluded that he had returned to the country, but, having understood that he was still in London, I lost no time in finding him out, and offering him any farther consolation or assistance that might remain in my power. I could understand what were his reasons for not calling upon me; grief and shame had, no doubt, kept him away.

Accordingly I made out his lodging, which was in the neighbourhood of Holborn. He was

at home when I called ; and assuredly, I must have possessed that callous heart, for which I was reputed, could I have looked unmoved upon the spectacle of misery which this worthy man presented. The sorrows of grey hairs are, of all others, the most affecting. Poets and romancers may charm us with highly seasoned pictures of the cares and distresses which appertain to youth and luxury, but the spectacle of old age suffering under the weight of substantial misfortune, engages my interest more sensibly, than the finest love-story in any of its thousand variations. The change which had taken place in Burgess's appearance, since his arrival in London, was powerfully striking. From his peaceful and contented life in the country, from which he had not been absent so much, I believe, as a week during the last thirty years, he had been hurried up to London, and from the moment of his arrival there, had enjoyed scarcely an hour's rest of mind or body, but every day had harassed him with an additional care, worse than the evil of its predecessor. When I found him at his humble lodg-

ing, he was lying down, to court a short respite from his troubles. Finding him in this situation, I would have retired, but he did not permit me. As he rose to receive me, I observed that sorrow had indeed marked him for her own. His cheeks were sunken, and his eyes seemed scarcely to belong to a living man. I could with difficulty understand what he said, his voice was so low, and his articulation so indistinct. The last week seemed to have added at least ten years to his age, and I have no doubt had taken so much from his life.

For some moments, he could not summon resolution to allude to the painful subject. At length he said :

“ Sir Matthew, if you had known all, you could never again have condescended to notice me. My noble, generous Sir, what will you say, when you know—”

“ My good friend,” said I, interrupting him, and giving him confidence by a warm pressure of the hand, “ I *do* know all, but that, be assured, can make no alteration in my friendly feelings towards you ; on the contrary, it in-

creases them, for now you have more need of my sympathy. There are great allowances to be made for the young man, who, I fear, fell into very bad hands. I have reason to know that he was acquainted with one individual who, I believe, is only excelled by the devil himself."

"God bless you, my good Sir Matthew!" cried Burgess, "for not entirely condemning my poor boy: he is bad enough; I don't attempt to say any thing in his favour, but I hope and believe his wickedness was not all his own. I know the individual to whom you allude—O what a villain! Tom has told me all about him: he had won money from him at gambling, which the infatuated boy had not the means of paying; he then acquitted him of the debt upon the condition that he should obtain from me such information as I was enabled to afford relative to what passed when you were at the Priory. I, little suspecting the design,—nor to give him his due, I must say, did my poor misguided son at that time,—readily told all that I knew and conjectured upon the subject, and took the liberty in those confidential communi-

cations of expressing my hope and belief that I should see you united to the dear young lady. Thus was I, as well as my son, made subservient to the iniquitous designs of this man. What wonder that the youth and inexperience of my son, should make him a victim to this practised deceiver? But I don't seek to palliate his vices. The Lord only knows, whose divine pleasure it has been thus to afflict me in my favourite child, how I have been bowed down by them. But I must not repine."

So speaking, his sufferings found a short relief in tears.

He informed me that he purposed leaving London, with his son, on the following day. "I shall not breathe freely or purely," said he, "until I get out of this vicious atmosphere." His fixed determination was to withdraw his son for ever from London: he assured me that the lad was overwhelmed with contrition, and I could easily believe that he had assumed the semblance of it. What he should do with the unfortunate youth, however, he knew not; but when I hinted that he should be disposed of

somewhere distant from home, lest he should corrupt his other children, I found that this over-beloved child was not so utterly cast from his father's affections, as he professed, for the old man rather fired at my suggestion: bad as Tom might be, he hoped he was not so bad as that. It is an ungracious office to reason with a parent's affection against his child, but I did what I could to warn him against being again deceived; but I found half my suggestions thrown away upon the affection of the good man, and the other half upon his simplicity and ignorance of the world.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LEAVING poor Burgess to his sorrows and his son, let me recall my reader's attention (if indeed it be not quite exhausted) to matters which more immediately concern the principal person in these memoirs.

I was one morning surprised (I will not say disagreeably) by a visit from Captain Axford, who had just arrived in town. Under the circumstances, however, I greeted him with much cordiality, which he affected to return with frankness, although I could perceive by his quivering lip and nervous manner, the agitation which he affected to conceal. At first we conversed upon the topics of the day, but when these were exhausted, there was a long and painful pause. My visitor was the first to

break it. He informed me rather abruptly that he was about to leave England.

To my common-place inquiry where he was going, and whether he intended making any stay abroad, he answered with much emotion that he should be absent some time—probably for ever.

“Indeed ! I was sorry to hear it ; might I ask why he said so ?”

“This country has not only lost all attractions to me,” he replied, with a tremulous voice, “but is grown absolutely irksome ; I have sold my commission, and shall go into foreign service immediately—probably into that of the Emperor.”

“I am really sorry to hear you talk in this manner,” rejoined I, with more concern than I had hitherto manifested ; “something must have offended you most grievously in this country.” He was silent for a few minutes, as if endeavouring to keep down some bursting emotion, and recollect himself ; he then spoke with that affectation of calmness, which is always most affecting in a man of sensibility, who cannot restrain his feelings.

“Sydenham, I have learnt with extreme regret that I have been the cause of some embarrassment between you and a person, to whom I cannot trust myself more distinctly to allude. Under a self-delusion, I misinterpreted the kindness of that incomparable individual. My only object in calling upon you, before I leave the country, is to free you from any doubt which you may still possibly entertain upon that subject. I am a self-deluded fool, that is all. I mistook her sisterly kindness for a feeling of a different nature, and I feel it my duty to assure you, upon my honour, that nothing ever passed between that individual and myself, that can reasonably entitle me to consider myself aggrieved by the preference she has shown for you. I have thought it my duty to make this explanation, and a painful duty it is. Having performed it, you may easily understand that I cannot wish to prolong this interview. Only say that you are satisfied.”

So speaking he rose, took his hat, and offered me his hand. I pressed it with unaffected warmth.

“My dear Axford, believe me I appreciate your kindness and generosity, but I do not like to part with you thus. We were honourable rivals for a great prize; fortune favoured me, but I cannot enjoy my advantage, unless you assure me that you are satisfied with the part I have taken in the contest.”

“God forbid, Sydenham, that I should feel otherwise! I, who know what you have gained, can most sincerely wish you joy of your success, but—I acknowledge my weakness—I cannot stay and witness your happiness. Accept, however, my very best wishes. Adieu!” And he broke away from me, as if apprehensive of an exposure of his feelings.

Coarse and contemptible, as well as hard, must that man have been, who could have regarded with indifference, much more with any sentiment of exultation, the distress of this most amiable young man. Indeed, I can safely say that I never felt more pain—scarcely less, I think, than that of Alice herself (and I know how deeply and how long it affected her) at his disappointment. Whether, if I had never inter-

posed, she would have at length yielded to his devotion, and his many amiable qualities, and irreproachable character, I do not pretend to decide; but I could not help feeling myself the cause of cutting off all his hopes of happiness. His mind was evidently prostrated by this event, and life presented to him then no spot, upon which hope might anchor. I heard that he left England on the very evening after this interview. For several days after, my spirits did not recover their equilibrium, so much was I affected by the idea of the desolation which I had innocently produced, in the prospects of this excellent and deserving young man.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE world is in the habit of calling marriage a lottery. This I take to be a vulgar error : if by marriage, is meant happiness in that blessed state, I humbly conceive that it is less a matter of chance than success in any other speculation. It rarely happens that people who are arrived at years of discretion unite for the purpose of realizing any romantic notions of felicity, but, on the contrary, for some specific and practical end. Matrimony is sometimes a pure matter of commerce, where each party possesses something which the other wants—as personal accomplishments, for adventitious advantages. Men of rank and fortune frequently marry, because they think it

proper to provide heirs. Ladies desire to enter into the connubial state because it is an honour, or because their homes happen to be intolerable to them. This class, I am inclined to believe, is a large one. Persons marry from ambition, or necessity ; for convenience, or mere caprice ; and matrimony is occasionally nothing more than a legal ceremonial for the union or transference of titles and estates. I believe it will be admitted, that marriages of these descriptions make up the large majority. In which of these, then, I ask, is there any thing of speculation ? Assuredly they are all cool, rational, substantial matters of business, in which a certain object is proposed, and generally acquired. Even professional fortune-hunters can scarcely be called speculators, for in most cases, cautious inquiries are set on foot, and pretty accurate information is procured, before either lady, or gentleman, becomes committed. Where then is the speculation in matrimony ? I know not, except indeed, when children and dotards, who know not what they are about, run their heads into

the noose, and then it certainly may be called a speculation, and an exceedingly bad one.

Unreflecting persons talk of happiness as if it was something standard ; whereas it is entirely regulated by the character and habits of each individual. The homely adage, “ what is one man’s meat, is another’s poison,” is perfectly applicable in this case. One man likes books and seclusion ; another is wholly devoted to rural occupations. A third hates the country and prefers the flags of Pall Mall, to the finest green fields in the world. You will find another manner of man, who partakes of the predilections of savages, and delights in bits of ribbons and trinkets. The high soul finds its element in strife and tumult. The mean spirit delights to reverence the dog in office ; and as Plato preferred the errors of Cicero to the sound reason of ordinary men, so this poor creature is more gratified by the contemptuous notice of his superiors, than by the respect of his equals. Are not all these several persons respectively happy in their ways ? Tranpose them—force one to adopt the views and manner

of life of his neighbour, and he becomes discontented and miserable.

Nothing, therefore, can exceed the arrogance and absurdity of those persons, who abuse and pity others for following objects, and living in habits different from their own; as if we had a right to quarrel with our neighbours, because “they have a hair more or less upon their beards.”

I was led into these rambling reflections by renewing my acquaintance with Gaitskell the pet poet, who, it will be recollected, married old Lady Margaret Haviland. When their nuptials were announced, every body exclaimed, “What a ridiculous match!” It was a standing subject of ridicule and satire. Some persons affected to look upon it in a graver light, and lamented over the infelicity which was to be anticipated, as a matter of course, from such an union. Yet what was the fact? Neither party could really be said to be under any delusion. The lady was old and ugly; she knew that Mr. Gaitskell did not seek her hand for the sake of her personal attractions,

nor did she marry him for rank or wealth, for she knew that he possessed neither: her only object was his society, and that she obtained; the consequence was, she did not repent the step she had taken. Mr. Gaitskell's object was rank and wealth, and he was proud and happy to be the husband of Lady Margaret Gaitskell.

We had exchanged cards, and I had seen him in town two or three times, but we had not yet spoken. Once, he happened to be walking arm in arm with a man of very high rank, and he was so absorbed with the consciousness of his situation, that he had neither eyes nor ears for any thing else. Another time, when we met, he was so intent watching for a bow from a coronetted carriage, that I passed by unnoticed. At length, I found him at home. His manner had acquired much importance and dignity since our last meeting. Instead of calling at a lodging, and finding my own way to his room, as I had done upon paying him a visit last year, I was ushered by a tall footman into a handsome library, where the husband of

Lady Margaret Gaitskell was disposed in a rich morning gown, before a table littered with splendidly bound books and new publications.

He rose to welcome me, and in doing so made me feel the difference between a householder of the parish of St. James's and the precarious occupier of a lodging in Marylebone. Then the light frivolous gossiping tone of his conversation had become, in some measure, settled into a less bachelor-like style. He regretted that Lady Margaret was not at home, (she was gone out in the carriage) as he was sure she would have been very happy to see me. He hoped to have the pleasure of seeing me at dinner before I left town, but really there were so many things going on that it was difficult to find a day; however, he would consult Lady Margaret. He spoke of "the Daventrys" rather patronizingly, I thought; and when I eulogized the beauty of Lady Charlotte, and the wit of Lady Elizabeth, he would smile as if pleased, and answer somewhat disparagingly, as a man does, when his

relatives or connexions are praised. Then, when I rose to depart, he shook my hand kindly, rang the bell, and assured me he should always be happy to see me. I should find him at home any day before three o'clock.

I am acquainted with few men who are happier in their matrimonial alliance, than my friend Gaitskell.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE fact of an engagement existing between Miss Paulet and myself was now pretty generally asserted ; for facts are subtile, as well as stubborn things, and however you may take care to keep them within bounds, they will escape and get abroad. The intelligence caused a greater “sensation” than had been produced by any event, since the marriage of a certain Duke, who had made half the virgin hearts in town sick, by deferring their hopes for five years. The withdrawal of a baronetcy, with a rent-roll of twelve thousand, was comparatively an insignificant circumstance, but it was the qualities of the individual, which attached so much interest to the event.

As I said before, I would rather that the matter should have been kept quiet, until just before the consummation, but as it had got wind, I should have been paying a bad compliment to the lady of my choice, and have been compromising my own independence, had I affected to deny, as if ashamed of, what I was going to do. Much *badinage*, indeed, had I to endure from my friends of both sexes, with the view of extorting from me either confession or denial, but I bore it all with unruffled *nonchalance*, neither admitting nor contradicting the rumour. Palpable were the malice and envy which glared through the ironical congratulations offered me by my fair friends, but I smiled upon their impotent assaults, and by a few well-pointed sarcasms, sent them away worsted from their unequal encounters, their disappointment still more embittered, and hatred and fear added to malice and envy.

Will the reader believe, that in two or three instances, the excitement caused by the rumour of my intended marriage, had nearly produced public scenes? I speak no more than truth.

I will mention a case. A certain young lady, or, to speak more accurately, an unmarried lady,—unless, indeed, all maidens are entitled, by courtesy, to the epithet *young*—however, a certain Miss, with no great personal attractions, and who set up for a *belle esprit*, had taken it into her head, that I was marked in my attentions to her, and had also inferred that I paid little regard to the vain and fleeting beauties of the exterior in comparison with the more solid and valuable endowments of the mind. To give her her due, she did possess some degree of sense and talent, and generally when we met, as I found her amusing, we used to ridicule the beaux and criticise the pretty fools in the room. I never dreamt of making any impression upon her heart, which I should have supposed to have been impenetrable stuff.

One evening about the time when my match was first bruited, Miss Sowerby, shortly after I had entered the room, and as I was talking to two or three people, advanced toward me, looking like a gorgon, though wearing an air of gay indifference, the most frightful aspect which rage

in an ugly woman can assume. Not understanding her object, I did not at first perceive this, though I was struck by something extraordinary in her appearance and manner; but when I penetrated the truth, I really wished myself elsewhere.

Miss Sowerby set on me with a vigour enough to throw the most cool and collected into disorder.

“Here,” she cried, in such a voice as to draw the attention of the people, who were standing near, and who turned round to witness the display; “here you may see Benedict the married man. I only heard it this morning, and you can’t think how I was amused—nay delighted. I hope you will show your intended; I would go a hundred miles to see her; she must be a faultless monster; surely she can’t be one of the black, brown, or fair description.”

“*How* kind and flattering this is of you,” answered I, “to take so much interest in my *affaires*, especially as I know that you consider such matters, in general, beneath your notice. I shall certainly have the pleasure of intro-

ducing my intended to you ; she will of course be the faultless monster in my eyes, though to your's, perhaps, she may appear a monster and not faultless."

" Oh ! for my part, I'm no judge ; but I've so often heard you find fault with that which ordinary people have thought unrivalled, and declare that there was no such thing as perfection under the sun, that I have some curiosity to see your specimen—this flower which, if I mistake not, you found blushing unseen, and very nearly wasting its sweetness on the desert air."

" Now really I should think you were disposed to be severe, if that were possible. If you will have it that I am to wed, let me wed in peace."

What passed farther between us, I don't distinctly recollect ; all I know is, that the lady grew more violent, and in proportion I became calmer and more keen, until perceiving in the countenances of the spectators the absurdity of the situation into which she had betrayed herself, and enraged at not having succeeded

in disconcerting me, she absolutely burst into a passion of tears, and rushed out of the house!

I incurred a good deal of harmless ridicule by the disastrous passion of Miss Sowerby, who was a very eccentric person, masculine and even vulgar. She was highly related by the maternal side, and was in the habit of talking of "her blood." She was obliged to leave London in consequence of her absurd conduct towards me.

But some of the enemies of my marriage, who were not manly enough to display their feelings openly, had recourse to anonymous letters, of which I received not a few upon the subject. Some of these were very bitter, others scurrilous, and two or three very disgusting and atrocious. Such proofs of my importance ought to have been very gratifying to my self-love.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I SUPPOSE Lord Truro's must be considered one of those cases in which matrimony is a speculation, at least on his side, for the other party knew perfectly well what she was about. Be this as it may, his eyes were very soon opened to the egregious folly of which he had been guilty. Now that the delusion under which he had committed himself, had pretty well passed away, it was impossible but that the society of his wife's family should be absolute torture to a man of the Marquis's high breeding; and from what I could see, his chief care now seemed to discipline them into some sort of humanity, in order to prevent their drawing disgrace upon him in public.

In fact, he admitted as much to myself, when I became well acquainted with him. He acknowledged to me how bitterly he repented of the injustice he had done to his nephew, and that he felt his punishment no more than due. At the same time, he could not, or would not, see the palpably interested motives which had governed his wife; his pride, or his personal vanity, still maintained that she was attached to him; though he fairly owned, that he would not have married her, had he known that, by doing so, he should have drawn down her relatives upon him.

“It is the most unfortunate thing in the world,” said he, “that I should be in Opposition just at this time, for otherwise I might have got rid of the man by some foreign appointment. What I’m to do I know not, for when I hint to him as broadly as I decently can to go away, he almost refuses in plain terms. I declare to you, Sydenham, he puts me in a fever even at home, so you may judge what are my feelings before people. The mother and sister I could pension off, if I

could only dispose of this horrid fellow ; but the brute is so damned touchy, that I dare hardly remonstrate with him for fear of being called out."

Here the poor Marquis would pour into my sympathising ear a whole catalogue of complaints and grievances, touching his new connections. He would describe, in feeling terms, the misery he endured whenever he went into company with them ; the horrors they had perpetrated when so and so were present, and how he had seen, upon these occasions, astonishment, amusement, and disgust, depicted in the countenances of strangers, and how his wife's cursed brother was asked about as a show, in the same manner as a Turk, or a Persian, or any other foreign curiosity.

The old gentleman was suddenly silenced, one morning, in the midst of his complaints, by the entrance of the subject of our conversation, the ouran-outang himself.

I had found it necessary, from the first, to behave to this man with *scrupulous and extreme civility*, which, as far as I know, is the only

mode, by which one can protect oneself against the advances of a disagreeable person. To my eye there was nothing attractive in Mr. Cornelius Cleghorn, for grossness or absurdity when it goes beyond a certain point, excites in me nothing but disgust. It will be easily believed that he tried all the powers of native impudence to force himself into my farther acquaintance, but hitherto I had been successful in keeping him at bay. He had latterly, however, pressed me rather hard, and having found fair means fail, seemed disposed to resort to strong measures, and to try whether he could not bully me into intimacy with him. But in proportion as he became familiar, I became more profoundly polite, so that it would have puzzled the ingenuity of any but a countryman of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, to pick a quarrel with my manner. The enterprising son of Erin, accordingly, when he found that I always managed to disengage myself from him, took occasion, when I excused myself for the fiftieth time from enjoying the pleasure of his company, to assume a formidable air, "and begged *lave* to inquire whether I

knew any thing of him, as I seemed to evince a strong disposition to shun his society."

"Sir," said I, with undiminished civility, "I know nothing of you whatever, and therefore, of course, presume that you are everything unobjectionable. I feel highly honoured by the wish which you have, upon several occasions, manifested to cultivate my acquaintance, and regret extremely that my engagements preclude the possibility of availing myself of your friendly dispositions."

"Sir Matthew," answered the savage with a still more determined air, "I don't at all understand the *maning* of this *tratement*; I'm a gentleman, and I beg to inform ye, surr, I'm *discindid* from royal blood—yes surr, from the Milasian kings, I claim my *discint*. Therefore, don't suppose, surr, that I'm anything *low*, for I'm as good as yourself."

"Sir, I don't dispute it; believe me, I never for one moment thought of making the comparison, but nevertheless, I repeat with regret that I must resist your argument, as well as

your entreaty. I assure you, Sir, I cannot be your friend, so pray transfer your partiality to some other object."

"That sounds very like an insult, Sir Matthew," said the savage, with a knowing and still more determined look.

"You have a fine ear, I fancy, Mr. Cleg-horn, for detecting such sounds; but let us reason calmly on the matter. You propose to be admitted to my friendship; I tell you, that it is not in my power to meet your wishes. You now seem inclined to try whether you cannot capture my affections by force of arms. But I think I shall be able to prove to you that defeat must inevitably, in like manner, be the consequence of that attempt; for if you should kill me, how is it possible that I can afterwards be your friend? and if I kill you, I put an end at once to your assiduities: but, as you are a dead shot, and as I likewise am a dead shot, the probability is that our fires would mutually take effect, and then what satisfaction would that be to us? So that you perfectly understand, I hope, that your views cannot be advanced in

this manner. Abandon, therefore, I beseech you, the useless pursuit, and accept my best wishes for your success in any other quarter."

The savage stared, as if not knowing exactly what to make of me, as the vulgar phrase is; but perceiving by this time, I suppose, that I was an impracticable person, he ceased to annoy me with any farther importunity.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF the Axfords, who were so entirely out of my set, I had seen scarcely any thing in town, except, indeed, the old gentleman, with whom I had occasionally a few minutes' conversation in the House. That speculation, upon which his mind had evidently, at one time, been so much fixed, I mean of connecting his family with the Paulets, had, since the marriage of Lord Truro, been gradually abandoned. Still he seemed not entirely to have loosened his hold upon it, while the single chance was left, that the unfortunate marriage might be unproductive. This I inferred, from the fact of his frequently making some allusion or inquiry, relative to that possibility, when we met ; although he got but little

satisfaction, as, in point of fact, I knew nothing about the matter.

One day, however, he arrested me at Belamy's, with a face full of meaning, and whispered me that he had been informed Lady Truro was *en famille*; was it true?

I assured him that I believed his intelligence was correct.

“Oh, indeed! well, I don't pity Paulet; it was all his own fault (do you understand?) he might have prevented it, if he had played his cards well. Was there ever such a business? a Marquisate and forty thousand a-year lost!—but—” as if a sudden thought struck him—“but it may be a girl, and it does not go in the female line—it may be a girl, eh?”

“True, and the boy may follow.”

“Oh yes to be sure, there's no knowing—no security; if she has one, why not two, or even half a dozen (don't you understand?)—well, was there ever such folly?”

A day or two after this conversation, he came up to congratulate me on my approaching mar-

riage with Miss Paulet, of which he had only just heard. He affected to commend my choice; Miss Paulet was a very amiable girl, and a great favourite of Lady Mary's; in fact she was a very nice person—a very nice person. The only objection to her was, that she had no fortune, he believed, but that could be no consideration to me, &c. If he had known how I stood with respect to the family, he should have been less free in his remarks, but he hoped that I would pardon, for really, until yesterday he had not the slightest suspicion of the happy event that was about to take place. To these civil speeches I bowed low, and from that day forth Mr. Axford ceased to take that kind interest in Paulet's misfortunes and follies, which he had hitherto manifested.

The only person whom I could have wished to avoid, after my engagement to Miss Paulet became known, was Lady Elizabeth Haviland. I must confess that I did not like the idea of encountering the malice and satire, which I was prepared to find called forth upon the occasion. At first, I felt disposed to keep out of her way,

which I could easily do, for as she never went into public, I never had an opportunity of seeing her but in the morning, when I occasionally called at the house, and was admitted to her own room, an especial favour, which I believe she granted to very few besides myself. I fear the reader will think it no good sign of amendment in me, that I continued to find pleasure in the society of this person; but really she was so sensible, so clever, and withal (for it must out) so amusingly venomous, that it was delightful variety occasionally to retreat to her boudoir, and laugh at the schemes and foibles of man and womankind.

If it be not almost a contradiction in terms, I should say that Lady Elizabeth and myself were very considerable friends, even though our friendship seemed to have its foundation in heartlessness and contempt of our fellow creatures. She liked me moreover, partly, I believe, because I had exposed and ridiculed the manœuvrings of her family, and had mortified her beauty sister. I had always professed myself to her a contemner of the fair sex, whom I turned into

remorseless ridicule, and I knew that she had given me credit for sincerity, and frequently has she, in order to draw from me some new sarcastic ridicule, jestingly anticipated the day when she should see me the captive of some accomplished fair one, led in silken chains to the altar of Hymen. Six little months had scarcely passed, and the idle prophecy was about to be verified! When I thought of these things, I certainly did not enjoy the notion of meeting Lady Elizabeth, but it would be cowardly to absent myself. Therefore I determined to put a good face upon the matter, to brave the danger manfully, and like many other tremblers, to wear an air of unconcern, as if nothing had happened, and I was perfectly indifferent about it. Accordingly, I took up my hat, and determined to go at once boldly to St. James's Square. On my way, I consoled any qualms which I might have felt, by deluding myself with possibilities—that she might be indisposed (for thank Heaven she was an invalid) or that she might be gone to some missionary meeting. But there was no such good luck.

“Was Lady Elizabeth Haviland at home?”
The porter would inquire of her ladyship’s footman. My suspense was somewhat relieved.

“My Lady is not very well to-day, Sir Matthew, but I think she will see you.” I would have withdrawn upon this plea, but I was not permitted, the footman was *sure* his lady would see me.

She received me as usual, but I could observe an expression of malice and triumph in her countenance, as of a tyrant who has a victim in his grasp. But that quality which preserves men in the utmost trials and perils—my self-possession, was staunch.

The conversation was, at first, rather tame. She asked me what was going on in the great world, of which she knew only by report, and I told her two or three *piquant* things, with the view of *effecting a diversion*. But she was too intent upon her purpose to be foiled, so I prepared myself for what I saw was inevitable.

“Oh, but,” cried she, “I am forgetting all this time to give you joy!”

Now there was little enough, perhaps, in these

words, but there was a great deal in the look, tone, and general manner, with which they were uttered. They effectually alarmed me, and I d—d her in my heart, for the most ill-natured hag, that ever existed.

“To wish me joy!” echoed I, with quiet unconsciousness; “for what, pray?”

“Are you not going to be married?”

“Oh, is that what you allude to? I expected from you condolence, instead of ironical congratulations.”

“Condolence! far be it from me to use such an ominous term. But I must confess, I was never more astonished, than when I heard the other day, that you were about to become the happiest of men. At first I would not believe it; I thought it was an ill-natured thing set about by some enemy, but, having had it confirmed by yourself, I can only offer you my congratulations. And now let me hear about your bride elect: she is perfection, I am told.”

“Oh, of course.”

“Then do enlighten my ignorance, and tell

me what perfection is, for I haven't the least idea. Is it like my sister Charlotte?"

"Except that my perfection is nearly as beautiful, I know no other point of resemblance."

"Is she wise?"

"She is not a fool."

"Oh, I see, beautiful and blue, I suppose."

"Not so, indeed; nothing more than a good understanding, sufficiently well informed, and an agreeable person, not deformed by affectation or envy. This is my account of her, but she is not generally liked by her own sex; she is too amiable."

"Now I'm beginning to understand you; we say an amiable woman, as a worthy man."

"Well, they are the materials which wear best, and therefore the best adapted for domestic life. I am come to that degree of experience, as to estimate very lightly those showy commodities, which look very well for ornament, but when you attempt to apply them to practical purposes, turn out to be mere lacker."

Lady Elizabeth, as yet, had not succeeded in giving me as much annoyance, as she had no doubt proposed, and I had calculated upon. Her malice, however, was not easily wearied, and she continued her efforts to throw ridicule upon my marriage, but I had now acquired complete confidence, and was enabled to parry her strokes of satire, and in proportion as I became more cool and imperturbable, she grew heated, and, in some measure, lost that self-command, without which you can never hope to inflict a wound. Her remarks were too palpably bitter and spiteful, for malice was no longer under the command of wit. I gave her to understand pretty plainly, that I saw what was passing in her mind, and took my leave, triumphantly felicitating myself upon my easy escape, and feeling but little inclination to repeat my visit, or indeed to keep alive my friendship with Lady Elizabeth Haviland.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IT was now the beginning of August, and the unusually protracted session was drawing to a close. It does not fall within the province of this work to give the detail and result of the great measure, which had been propounded to parliament, or rather to the country, for to the mighty voice of the latter, had the former been constrained, in a great degree, to yield. It is sufficient to say, that the excitement gradually wore itself out, and the well-meaning majority had subsided into that state, which rendered it accessible to the voice of reason. The happy consequence was, that a prudent compromise was entered into, angry feelings were allayed, and the principle of moderation was adopted, with

the almost general consent of those, whose opinions were of importance.

Under these circumstances, the position of parties was materially altered. That to which I belonged, which was a middle one, between stubborn stagnation and extreme change; professing to respect the signs of the times and to adapt itself, though slowly and cautiously, to the moral and economical revolutions produced by time; this party, which was composed of men of sound heads and immaculate characters, rose rapidly in public estimation. Ministers soon began to be seriously sensible of our increasing importance, and made anxious overtures for a coalition. But we took high ground. The government endeavoured to fritter us away by negociation, but this we cut short, by stating a few specific and peremptory propositions, to which we required a speedy and categorical answer. Before they decided, they looked to the country, but found distrust; they turned to a high quarter, but were alarmed by a dubious countenance. Our terms were therefore unhesitatingly accepted. We had stipulated that

certain members of the existing government should be dismissed, and that we should nominate to the vacancies, that certain rumoured cabinet measures should be disclaimed, and pledges given for the adoption of others, which we advocated.

The new arrangements were speedily completed, and received the acquiescence of the country. Mr. Palmer took high office, and the ablest members of the party, of which he was the acknowledged head, were admitted to considerable power.

It will be presumed, I flatter myself, that my humble claims did not pass altogether unnoticed in these changes. They were tendered, indeed, a splendid compensation; Mr. Palmer, in drawing up the list, did me the honour to make his first application to me, and requested that I would permit him to name me for an office second only to his own, and entitling me to a seat in the cabinet. The offer was too great to be immediately accepted or declined, and I was allowed the utmost possible period for consideration—forty-eight hours.

I lost no time in communicating to Alice, by letter, the distinction which was placed within my reach, desiring the benefit of her opinion upon the subject. I received her answer the same evening.

“Your note has filled me with a complication of feelings—pride, joy, and embarrassment. I am proud to find the exalted estimation in which your talents are held thus early: even were I to consider your application for my advice merely as a mark of your regard, it would afford me the deepest gratification, but I cannot and will not regard it in this light, though I scarcely dare hazard an opinion, with the view of influencing your decision.

“If I were assured that your services in the government would be of importance to your country, I would not, for an instant, listen to the suggestion of my private feeling. To see you in so exalted a station, and discharging its duties in such a manner as to secure the admiration of your countrymen, would indeed yield me the most heartfelt delight; but oh, Sydenham, let

me venture to entreat, that you will not too readily be governed by the dictates of ambition. Do not think me ignorant or selfish, if I disclose my undisguised feeling, and acknowledge to you that I view with reluctance and apprehension, the probability of your accepting Mr. Palmer's offer. I have been thinking about it ever since I received your letter, as you may easily believe. I need not remind you of all the engrossing claims of public life. Are you content, or is it imperative upon you to sacrifice for it every thing else? I will not add another word upon the subject, for perhaps I have already been presumptuous. I only entreat that you will let me know your determination, as soon as it is formed.

“Ever faithfully yours.

“ALICE PAULET.”

A man who is vacillating between contending arguments or inclinations, is glad of a straw to turn the scale. Had my disposition, however, been much stronger towards the acceptance of Palmer's offer than it was, the light in which

Alice put it as a sacrifice of private happiness, and which I perfectly understood, delicately as she adverted to it, would have decided me in the negative. I wrote therefore to Palmer, expressing all that was incumbent upon me to express upon the occasion, but declining to incur the cares of public business. I cordially promised him, however, my best support, as a Member of the House of Commons.

The office which I had refused, was accordingly bestowed upon a most able and efficient person and a considerable friend of mine. The kindness of Palmer, however, did not end here. He wrote to me a few days after, to state that his Majesty had been graciously pleased to intimate, through him, his pleasure that I should take my seat in the Privy Council. This flattering and distinguished mark of consideration, I, of course, accepted with gratitude, and I was sworn in forthwith. At the same time, with equally emphatic kindness and respect, it was intimated to Mr. Paulet, that a peerage, with the rank of

Viscount, and a high office in the Household, would be conferred on him, if he wished, but these honours were severally respectfully declined. He preferred a private station, and nothing but necessity, or the commands of his sovereign, should induce him to enter public life.

Nothing farther now detained me in town. Had I consulted my earnest inclination, I should have pressed upon Alice to remit the remainder of my term of probation, but I abstained, from a sense of delicacy, which I knew she would appreciate. In two months, I should be at liberty to claim the rich reward of my constancy, but though his period was not inconsiderable in a lover's estimation, yet I hoped to fill it up with business. It was generally understood that the session was to be closed by a dissolution, and the election would occupy me that time at least, for I had already published my address to my native county, for which I was to stand on the Government interest, with another gentleman, against the nominees of the Marquis of Daventry, who had gone into furious opposition,

in consequence of having been refused a vice-regal government, for which he had applied under the new arrangements.

Before I left London, I gave a farewell dinner to the flower of my old acquaintances and friends. It did not go off with as much brilliancy as usual. Some *badinage* was passed off upon my approaching change of situation, but it was neither rich nor rare. I was prepared for all the common-place jokes, which I knew I should have to encounter, upon the occasion, and finding that they made no impression, my friends desisted from wasting their wit.

The illustrious club of good fellows paid me the compliment of a dinner upon the melancholy occasion of my withdrawing from their society. Mr. Lutwyche presided; and proposed my health for the last time, observing, that the next time they met, they should have the melancholy pleasure of drinking my memory.

I rose to return thanks.—“Gentlemen, you

will credit my sincerity when I assure you that it is not without regret I bid you farewell. My excellent friend in the chair has expressed his doubts, whether there be much wit in the step I am about to take, but there is an old proverb, which affirms, that every man must eat a certain quantity of dirt during his life, and in like manner, I believe it may be said, that the wisest must be guilty of a certain proportion of folly, before he dies. Now, I hope, that the adventures and practices of my past life, not omitting my attendance here, may have nearly made up my ration of the latter, and that I may henceforth live in sobriety and good sense. I make no attempt to convert the Pope and his Cardinals, for I know that you are all sworn foes to matrimony, and most religiously eschew the pleasures of domestic life. All I can say, therefore, is, that the resolution I have taken is the result of deliberate conviction, and that if I find upon experience, that I have been in error, I hope you will again receive me among

you. Wherever I may be, I must always, in remembrance of past times, continue your sincere well-wisher both as a body and in your individual characters. Therefore permit me to propose a toast—"Health and immortality to the Inimitable Livers." "

CHAPTER XXX.

MY reception in the country was such as to convince me, that not only my own return, but that of my friend and coadjutor Mr. Maddison, was certain. Nevertheless, Lord Haviland did as much as he could to annoy, but on the day of nomination he was not forthcoming, and accordingly the Sheriff declared "the Right Honourable Sir Matthew Sydenham, and Edward Maddison, Esquire, duly elected."

I was enabled likewise to defeat the Havilands upon their own filthy dunghill, the precious borough of P——. After a close contest, in which my candidate was vigorously and venomously opposed by Mr. Ball, Lord Havi-

land, who had fallen back upon the borough (his creature Jackson having given place to him) was compelled to yield to a young gentleman of distinguished talents, whom I had recommended to the electors, this being one of the places which had been *eunuchized* by the Reformers.

The tide of fortune having thus run as smooth with me in public, as in private life, I retired to Sydenham, to await, with as much patience as I might, the period when my happiness was to be consummated. In the meantime, however, I was not idle; I found an interesting employment in making preparations for [the reception of my bride, and studying those minute and delicate attentions, which are so gratifying to the heart of woman, and which experience had taught me were no less delightful for the man of refinement and feeling to bestow upon the object of his affections. With the particulars of these, however, the reader has no concern. But my cares were not terminated by the furniture of a boudoir nor the arrangement of a flower-garden. I endeavoured to consult

the tastes and wishes of Alice in more important particulars. I inquired into the condition of the tenantry, and, as far as I could, removed every abuse, so that they might present as fair an appearance as possible to their lady.

That which I esteemed the especial nuisance of the neighbourhood was now, to my great gratification, abated. Mrs. Chilton had ceased to preach the Millennium to the good people of P——, and to concern herself in the intellectual and moral growth of their children. She had gone elsewhere, to announce the battle of Armageddon, of which she declared that her ears could now faintly distinguish the approaching rumour, and her eyes dimly discern the glittering panoply. In plain truth, this lady's system, which had now time to develope itself, had proved to be as mischievous as most other systems, which propose to adapt human nature to their Procrustean models. The case of the Pollards, which the reader will recollect in a former volume, was not a solitary one; many other parents had reason to bewail the day, when they permitted their children to be placed

under the tuition of this weak and vain, though, I am perfectly willing to admit, perhaps in the main, well-meaning woman. The same maxim of policy, however, which forbids ignorance of the law to be admitted as an excuse for its infraction, likewise denies to mischief-makers the benefit of good intentions, which, if allowed, would afford a cloak, under which knavery and folly might continually tamper with sacred things. The beneficial effects of Mrs. Chilton's absence had already become apparent, in the healing of religious dissensions in families, in the returning to the church of those persons, who had been seduced from its mild and rational doctrines, by the sound and fury of the cowhouse.

I was exceedingly pleased at the opportune removal of this annoyance, for I had no mind that Alice should be engaged in any thing like a contest with Mrs. Chilton, whose opinions, both on religion and education, differed so entirely from those, which the former entertained, and had enforced with such beneficial effects at the Priory. I had frequently con-

versed with Alice upon the subject of the P—— sibyl, and though she would remonstrate with me upon the harshness with which I was accustomed to express my reprobation of any thing that offended me, and in this particular case thought me much more stern than was justifiable, giving Mrs. Chilton full credit for good intentions, and allowing them more weight in *foro conscientiæ* than I could accord, she was still convinced of the folly and presumption of a female setting herself up publicly to expound the word of God, even though she should not deviate from the line of orthodoxy, and agreed with me in thinking her fine theories of education a serious evil. I knew, therefore, that she would be highly pleased to hear of Mrs. Chilton's departure.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ALTHOUGH I was interdicted from keeping up a correspondence with Alice, Lady Eleanor Palmer, who was staying at the Priory, indulged me with frequent letters, in which I was assured, that all was, as I could wish, in a certain quarter.

As a specimen, I will extract a part of one of the lengthened communications, which I was in the habit of receiving at this time from my kind and excellent friend.

“ I am sorry to tell you (though I should not be surprised if the intelligence afforded you but little regret) that Alice seems unwell and out of spirits. Your vanity will, no doubt,

render it unnecessary for me to point out the probable cause. The truth is, that the dear girl's mind is by no means at rest with respect to the solidity and permanence of your attachment. I only wish you could view unobserved what passes here, and I should no longer be provoked by the doubts which you occasionally hint (you know you dare not openly express them to me) of her capability of a strong feminine attachment, because she is so sensible, reflecting, and prudent. One would suppose, to judge from the manner in which you talk and write, that you believed none but fools, and giddy thoughtless girls—the very persons who have been the constant objects of your ridicule and abuse—could entertain that devoted and ardent sentiment called love, as distinguished from warm friendship, founded upon esteem and a sympathy of tastes, which you seem to suppose is the more accurate description of the feeling which Alice entertains toward you. With all your worldly knowledge and boasted penetration, I will make free to tell your wisdom, that you do not yet comprehend

what a pearl of great price is the love of a virtuous woman ; but I hope and believe, that before you are a year older, you will have learned to appreciate it. Alice cannot sigh and talk sentimental nonsense, and go through all the *scenery* of an *affaire*, I admit, but the placid surface of her manner covers a depth of feeling which, I fancy, is not to be found in those who superficially display much more agitation.

“ But I do you the justice to believe, that you are not altogether sincere in these suspicions ; you cannot be really ignorant how much the dear, incomparable girl, has suffered on your account ;—yes, and continues to suffer. She is apprehensive for your affections, and with some reason, but you have none whatever for doubting about her. She flatters you, by her fears, that you are not exempt from those changes and caprices, which are incident to persons of extraordinary mental endowments. She has the noblest confidence in you as a scrupulously honourable and high-minded character, but she says that your past life is not the best guarantee

that you are qualified for domestic happiness. Your life, it must be owned, has hitherto been one unvarying scene of excitement and dissipation, redeemed certainly by some traits of divinity, but the general tenor apparently heartless and immoral. It is from these reflections, that the lively imagination of her, whom, though I know it was only to call forth my indignation—you once compared to a Grecian statue, faultless but cold—conjures up chimeras that your constancy may be more worn out, even before the expiration of the term, when you are at liberty to claim her as your bride, and that, still worse, you may repent after you are irretrievably committed. She is haunted by the idea that, after a time, you may find ennui at home, and again be tempted to seek for happiness in worldly pleasures. You cannot but confess that there is some foundation for these fears. Your cause is, however, earnestly advocated; my darling Jane is your staunch friend; she says that Alice should not employ her ingenuity to your disadvantage, that it is unfair to think of the past, for that you have now sown

your wild oats, and are coming to a steady time of life (what do you say to that?) and when she finds argument fail, as usual, supplies its place by the energy of her own feelings. She earnestly declares, ‘I am sure he will prove all that we can wish or desire; I was never so much deceived as I should be, were Matthew Sydenham to disappoint our expectations, but I know he will not.’ Little as you deserve it, I am still likewise your advocate, and Jane and I by turns celebrate your praises, to which I can assure you Alice listens with no small complacency.”

Had I not reason to consider myself the most fortunate of mankind? In the apprehensions which Alice expressed with regard to my future conduct, I found the best security that it should be irreproachable. For what man, deserving the name, could be indifferent to a beautiful and accomplished woman, as long as he was satisfied that she continued devoted to him? Lady Eleanor was right in supposing that I never really doubted her affection; for though I knew

that women of strong minds have seldom very warm affections, yet when both were combined, the latter were always in proportion, and I had seen enough of Alice to be assured that she was not deficient in the most important characteristic of her sex.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE period of probation was now within a few days of expiring, and accordingly I wrote to Alice. I stated at length, and in the most emphatic language I could command, my views and feelings, which were the same that I had expressed in London six months before. I assured her, as I truly might, that I had examined myself thoroughly, and had subjected the matter to the most calm deliberation, the result of which was a deep-rooted conviction that our sentiments and tastes possessed that degree of sympathy, which must ensure our happiness in an union through life. I implored her, therefore, if she placed any confidence in my sincerity, if she believed that I had any knowledge

of my own mind and heart, and lastly, if time and absence had effected no alteration in her feelings toward me, not to suspend my happiness by any farther delay.

To this letter I received by return of post the following reply.

“ Priory, September, 4, 18—.

“ I cannot lose a moment in answering your most grateful letter, although utterly incapable of expressing all that I feel at this moment. I shall attempt no more than simply to make myself understood, which is best done by confessing, without farther disguise or restraint, the happiness with which your letter has filled me. Yes, dearest Sydenham, your love is, indeed to me, the greatest of all earthly blessings. Believe me I have the fullest confidence in you in every respect; it would be ungenerous to doubt after the earnest and heartfelt terms, in which you have expressed yourself. I thank Heaven that I had firmness enough to resist your importunities, although powerfully seconded by my own wishes, to consent to our marriage six months

ago, for then I should not have accompanied you to the altar with that delightful security which I now experience. Forgive me then, dearest, for wronging you so far as to demand this delay, as a criterion of your sincerity, and ascribe it to any thing but indifference, from which I once heard, with the deepest pain, you suspected it to proceed. I know, however, that you have now been disabused of this error, and it shall henceforth be my care to render it impossible for such a suspicion ever again to cross your mind. I am sure I need not say how anxious I am to see you. My agitation is so great that I can hardly hold the pen. God bless you, my dearest Sydenham,

“And believe me ever your affectionate

ALICE.”

“The Right Honourable Sir Matthew
Sydenham, Bart., M.P.”

Reader, if you have ever been in love, you will easily believe, that within an hour after the receipt of this letter, I was in my travelling carriage, rolling over the road to the Priory,

with all the speed that four horses could muster.

The reader, no doubt, anticipates most of what remains to be told. Why should I describe scenes, which, however interesting to the actors, are notoriously flat and wearisome in detail. The happiness of the principal parties, the joy of Lady Jane, and the fervent manner with which Paulet welcomed me as a member of his family, can be imagined. I eagerly pressed for an early day, nor did Alice affect to resist my wishes. An early day was therefore fixed.

The interval was, for the most part, occupied by the necessary arrangements. By the desire of Alice, in which I cordially coincided, the ceremony was to be strictly private, and to be performed by our worthy friend Burgess, in the parish church. The members of the bride's family alone were to be present, with the exception of our mutual valued friend, Lady Eleanor Palmer.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BEFORE I draw to a conclusion, it will perhaps be expected that I should give some account of what became of several persons, who have figured in these volumes.

Of the Havilands little remains to be told. Deprived of the great political power which they had possessed for half a century, they withdrew from court in dudgeon, and went abroad, where the Marquis, disgusted with his disappointments, threatened in future to spend his princely fortune. Lady Charlotte Cookson ended her career, about two years after her marriage, by accepting the protection of a noble Duke, much celebrated for his choice collection of beauties. Her husband, like a sensible man,

went to law, and received the handsome sum of ten thousand pounds, in exchange for a worthless wife. He subsequently assured me that he considered himself as having made an excellent bargain. Lady Elizabeth, as she advanced in years, grew more devoted to religious pursuits. Upon Lord Daventry's death, she lived in her brother's house, in the situation of the maiden aunt, her caprices consulted, and her sarcasms smilingly endured, by her nephews and nieces, for reasons which she perfectly understood. At length she was deposited in the family vault, and the affectionate attentions of her relatives were rewarded by legacies of fifty pounds each, to buy mourning rings. The bulk of her fortune, being nearly forty thousand pounds, was bequeathed to the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," and various other religious and charitable institutions. Lastly, I must not omit to mention that a treaty of marriage was concluded between Lord Richard Haviland and the heiress of Elmwood, in consideration, it was said, of one hundred thousand pounds paid down, and

the reversion of the noble property after the death of Mr. Jackson.

The latter name recalls to my mind that unhappy relation of my own, whom I now mention for the last time. He was not long a burden upon my bounty. His miserable end was worthy of his life—his body was found in the Seine, with the head nearly severed from the body. It was supposed that he had been murdered by a young Frenchman of rank, of whom he had won a large sum of money, which the former could not pay without ruin. As there was, however, no sufficient evidence against the nobleman, he was unmolested. Although I was of course shocked at the horrible manner of my uncle's death, I certainly could not but feel satisfied at his removal, for as long as he lived, I did not consider myself secure from his machinations.

Poor Burgess never held up his head after the disappointment of his son. He had set his heart upon this boy, and not all the worth of his other children could recompense him for the frustration of the hopes which he had

formed, with the infatuation of a doting parent. The young man proved utterly incorrigible. Violent and openly profligate natures are not desperate, but the subtle and hypocritical are impracticable. The good Vicar was advised, and after postponing the measure until the last moment, when convinced by repeated instances that there was no chance of amendment, he consented, to article his son to an attorney, as the profession best adapted to his genius and character.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING thus dismissed the inferior part of the *dramatis personæ* from the stage, it only remains for me, the principal actor, to say a few words, by way of taking leave for ever of the gracious reader.

This work, then, I should say, was originally a mere journal, exhibiting a history of my life, a record of my reflections upon various occasions, and the progress and changes of my character and opinions. It will be seen, that I commenced life with a preconceived notion of the meanness of human nature. This prejudice was fostered by my early experience, and I persuaded myself into misanthropy. I have said at the commencement of my memoirs, that I was a person

of a cold heart, with a vivid apprehension of the odious and ridiculous. Nay, I even persuaded myself that virtue was incapable of exciting an interest in me, and that I delighted in the contemplation of the baser features of human nature. I internally disapproved of and regretted these propensities, and with a view to correct them, went abroad, like Diogenes, in search of honesty ;—with what success the reader of the three former volumes of these memoirs may judge. Virtue I found to be a cloak assumed to conceal the foulest deformities. Many who take up this book will, I am aware, soon throw it away, under the impression that the writer is a cold-blooded, dissolute person, who sat down with the deliberate design of vilifying human nature ; but I confidently hope that the more patient and discerning readers, who may bear with me throughout, will admit the justice of my applying to my own character the following passage from one of the invaluable essays of a profound thinker and accurate observer of man :—

“ I am far from thinking that all those who have depreciated our species have been enemies

to virtue, and have exposed the frailties of their fellow creatures with any bad intention. On the contrary, I am sensible that a delicate sense of morals, especially when attended with a splenetic temper, is apt to give a man a disgust to the world, and to make him consider the common course of human affairs with too much indignation."

Such sentiments as I professed in the earlier part of my memoirs, I am happy to say, are now in a great measure, supplanted by more liberal and kindly feelings. Vice, selfishness, and folly, are, no doubt, the predominant characteristics of that society, which calls itself, by excellence, the World; but it would be exceedingly erroneous to take that as a specimen of the world and human nature in general. Still I am by no means an optimist; I still see much to disgust and displease me, nor can I ever be brought, after what I have experienced, to place any confidence in outward appearances; I have only ceased to presume ill of every person who approaches until I have received most ample and satisfactory proof to the contrary.

Reader, I will not detain you by dry and stale morality, but, in bidding you farewell, content myself with expressing my cordial wish that my fair admirers (forgive the presumption of Matthew Sydenham!) may not think it beneath them to cultivate the virtues and graces of her who is, in my eyes, perfection ; and that my male friends will take a lesson from the authentic memoirs of one, who may say that he has occupied a very high and brilliant station in the eye of the world, how inadequate are such hollow and precarious gratifications to solid and permanent happiness.

NOTE.

THE Right Honourable Baronet's Memoirs here close somewhat abruptly, and as it is possible that the reader may have some curiosity to obtain a degree of insight into the domestic life of the autobiographer, the Editor takes the liberty of publishing a few letters which afford sufficient information upon that subject. How he obtained possession of the subjoined documents, is a story with which the reader will hardly care to be troubled.

LETTER I.

Mrs. Trefusis, to Lady Sydenham.

“MY DEAR ALICE,

“I CANNOT suffer a day to pass after our return to England, without writing to you, such is my anxiety and *curiosity* to know with what

aspect fortune seems disposed to regard your marriage. It is now of more than four months' date; the novelty, therefore, is nearly worn, and you may now be enabled to form some notion of your prospects. To you, who never can find happiness abroad, marriage is indeed a matter of vital importance, and I know that you entered upon it with fear and trembling; but I hope and believe, that your mind has, by this time, been convinced, that there is no cause for apprehension. You know that I never considered your *mari* such a formidable person, as you and most other people did. I always said he was a person who would require a very little management to make and keep him tractable. Yet you would persist in disturbing the favourable opinion of his character, which you derived from your own discernment and good sense, and in making yourself miserable by listening to the gossip and folly of other people, because you looked upon him with partial eyes. You had been told that dissimulation was at the head of his catalogue of imperfections; that his character had no settled shade, but took its

colour from the society he was among; that he was heartless, malicious, and unprincipled. To my dismay, I must confess his subsequent conduct to you seemed to corroborate all these impressions; but the cause was happily explained, and then you appreciated those traits of a noble and a kind nature, which I told you of him. Still you could not reconcile to your *beau idéal*, some passages in the life of your hero; and seemed to think that I was excusing immorality, when I said that I doubted whether it was to be considered a bad symptom for a young man not to set out in life with too much sobriety and prudence; and when, by way of apologizing for any little irregularities and vanities of our friend, I reminded you that he had been for two years the most admired man in London, with a provoking perverseness you answered, that such a person would be ill calculated to appreciate the happiness of private life.

“I only remind you of all this, my dear, because I am convinced that you will, by this time, feel persuaded that my opinions and

advice were not those of an ill-judging friend. Still you must not be alarmed, should you not have found him as yet quite broken in ; a little management—now do not start away at the word, as if I was going to recommend female art to usurp the office of love—a little management then, I repeat, may still be necessary to keep him in order. Your baronet is, no doubt, a very incomparable person ; but at the same time he, like every body else, has his little faults. If any thing can be regarded in two lights, he will be apt to take the unfavourable point of view. Now you must not, upon these occasions, gravely set about arguing him out of such an error, but rally him upon it, and laugh it off. He is somewhat capricious too, permit me to say, and takes disgusts into his head for no sufficient reason ; and if you were to be strait-laced upon all occasions, it is probable that he would take offence at it. These little things, believe me, are worth attending to, and do more to maintain the harmony of married life, than is dreamt of in your philosophy : therefore, do not disdain to employ tact, which I

know you have been in the habit of regarding as an unworthy instrument.

“ Let me hear from you soon, my dear Alice, and believe me ever,

“ Your affectionate,

C. TREFUSIS.”

“ P.S. I saw poor George Axford at Paris. He looked distracted, and told me he was going to offer his services to the Emperor. Poor creature, he must be dreadfully in love ! What you have to answer for !”

LETTER II.

Lady Sydenham, to the Lady Eleanor Palmer.

“ MY dearest friend’s last letter was most welcome, because it encouraged me to hope that I should soon see her as my guest. Indeed I am most anxious that you, who have had so large a share in promoting, should come and witness, my happiness. Your kind heart will, I know, find its richest reward in being an

eye-witness of that happiness which, but for your exertions, might never have been experienced.

“I may indeed venture to say that, with respect to myself personally, I have not a wish ungratified. I have found him, in every respect, to be such as you described. Every thing that you said of the generosity and nobility of the mind, the ignorance of every low and petty feeling, has been amply proved. But you could not be aware of the unwearied and delicate consideration which is so inexpressibly delightful, because it can proceed from nothing but the warmest attachment, and the utmost refinement of mind. I need not tell you of the brilliancy and variety of his conversation ; but, perhaps you are yet to learn that those unrivalled powers of instruction and amusement are constantly exerted for my sole benefit ; yet I once supposed that these dazzling accomplishments were displayed only for admiration, or for the purpose of sacrificing the other sex to his vanity. I blush with remorse to think how I have wronged him, but in

the reflection I find an additional cause of love and gratitude to you, my friend, for disabusing me. Our marriage is certainly as yet recent, and forgive me, dear Lady Eleanor, if I sometimes am unable to prevent a fear from crossing my mind, that time may make an alteration—that this happiness is not to last—that this life will grow monotonous to him. Oh pray persuade me out of such a fearful apprehension. I had a kind letter, a few days since, from Charlotte Trefusis, who cautions me to guard against such a possibility as I have named. I shall endeavour to profit by her hints, which are excellent. My great consolation is, that my husband's manner toward me differs from that sort of fondness, which I have seen young men display toward their brides. He never shows his devotion before people; his attentions toward me are those of a most affectionate husband, but still I can never forget that he is a man of the world, and a man of sense. This leads me to hope that I shall never experience a change. I know that I need not apologize to you for filling up my letter with my own per-

sonal interests, for I know that you entirely sympathize with them. Let your next name the day when I may expect you, and believe me,

“ My dearest friend,

“ Your most grateful and affectionate,

“ ALICE.

“ P.S.—Charlotte mentions in her letter that she saw George Axford at Paris, and that he was looking ill. This is the only drawback to my happiness. To hear that he had overcome that unfortunate preference would be a great relief to my mind.”

LETTER III.

The Lady Jane Paulet to Sir Matthew Sydenham.

“ ARE you such a high and mighty personage that you cannot condescend to answer my poor letter? Full a fortnight ago I wrote to you, and not the slightest notice have you yet taken of my dispatch, for I can-

not deign to accept as an acknowledgment the cavalier and disrespectful message you sent me by Alice—‘Tell Jane I received her letter.’

“If I kept up my own dignity, I would take no farther epistolary notice of you, but I doubt whether that would be any punishment, therefore I shall content myself, Sir, with enjoining you to show me and any future letters, with which I may be disposed to favour you, more respect. You must, however, be informed that St. Leger claims an equal share with myself in the purport of this letter, which is earnestly to request that you and Alice will pass your Christmas with us, to meet the same party that was with us last year. Now do not attempt to write any thing in the shape of an excuse; come you must, nor do I think that either you or Alice will be very reluctant to celebrate the first anniversary of your meeting at the dear Priory. For my own part, I consider it, *next to one*, the happiest day of my life.

“How I shall delight in seeing you, who in your insolence once boasted (as I have heard,

and can easily believe) that out of any given three women, who were not previously engaged, you would undertake to gain the affections of one within three months, for a wager of as many thousand pounds, but could get no one to accept the challenge—how I shall rejoice to see such an insolent man converted into a poor tame, harmless Benedict ! The accounts which Alice writes of you, from time to time, are very encouraging. She says that you were rather restive at first, but that you are daily becoming more and more docile. I once thought myself a very knowing person, for I gave her instructions how to manage you, according to the best of my judgment and experience, of which I can assure you I had no mean opinion, but I now find that the pupil can teach the master. There is a very profound remark upon the subject in her last letter, in which she says, that there are two classes of husbands, the fools, who, like donkeys, can neither be coaxed nor kicked into any thing, and the men of sense and spirit, like generous steeds, which can be governed easily, if they are not allowed

to see by what means. Answer this letter immediately, and in the affirmative, or I am no longer

Your affectionate,

“JANE.

“St. Leger has come in, and takes the pen from me to add a line. He has given me a sad scolding for what I have written about Alice, and insists upon my declaring ‘the whole a fabrication of my own, without any foundation whatever.’ It is very mortifying to make this confession, and I am placed in the awkward dilemma that I cannot venture to excuse myself for doing it, because I was compelled by my husband, having just before boasted that I had the tyrant under my subjection !”

LETTER IV.

Sir Matthew Sydenham, to Mr. Palmer.

Sydenham Park, May, 18—.

“MY DEAR PALMER.

“ALTHOUGH you have given me two days to deliberate upon the proposal contained in your

letter just received, I have no reason for hesitating a moment to answer it. Whether your most flattering offer is dictated by personal friendship, or a flattering estimate of my capabilities, I am bound to tell you frankly, that my private feelings are averse to the conspicuous and responsible station, which you invite me to occupy. I am so well persuaded that you can find many men, at least equally able, and more willing than myself, to discharge the duties of a cabinet minister, that I tell you at once, how I am disposed with respect to your offer; but should you, for any reason not explained in your letter, be particularly desirous that I should accept the vacant office, I would not for one moment be withheld, by any selfish reluctance, from affording my king, my country, or my friend, whatever benefit either could propose to derive from my humble services.

“You, my gifted friend, who have always been addicted to the ‘infirmity of noble minds,’ will perhaps be unable to understand my feelings, when I assure you that Ambition, though I was perhaps at one time somewhat dazzled by

her splendour, has no longer any charms for me. Within these two years, I have been taught to appreciate a life fraught with more solid and permanent happiness, than any which Ambition can afford—not so brilliant indeed, but still equally useful, although confined, but commensurate to the abilities of the individual. Ambition is a stern mistress, who will accept nothing less than the whole man; this I have not now to give, nor will I be seduced from one to whom I owe the tenderest allegiance, to pay devotion to this haughty and capricious temptress, albeit she is, as you say, a goddess, and is disposed to favour me with her smiles. In my more youthful and ardent days, I may not have been daunted by her fiery passions, which the most vigorous of her votaries could not satiate, but, in the endeavour, have fallen victims to her insatiable lust. Now, however, no longer *calidâ juventa*, I am not tempted to sacrifice, for the sake of her splendid favours, the tranquil security, and, if you will, obscurity of private life.

“Again accept my best thanks for this and

all other kindnesses. With fervent wishes that success may attend all your undertakings,

“ Believe me, my dear Palmer,

“ Your most obliged and faithful friend,

“ M. SYDENHAM.”

“ Right Hon. John Palmer.”

The Editor has selected the above from a number of letters in his possession, relative to the Sydenham family. Before he closes the work, it may be proper to mention a few events which the Right Honourable Baronet has not himself recorded.

The Marchioness of Truro died in giving birth to a son and heir, who survived. Lord St. Leger, when a child of only five years, succeeded, by the death of the Marquis, to the title and estates; his lordship's cousin, Mr. Paulet, and Sir Matthew Sydenham are his guardians. The Marchioness's family returned to Ireland upon her ladyship's death, and Mr. Cornelius Cleghorn was killed in a duel about three years since.

It gave Lady Sydenham great satisfaction to

learn shortly after her marriage, that Captain Axford was united to a young lady of great accomplishments and amiability.

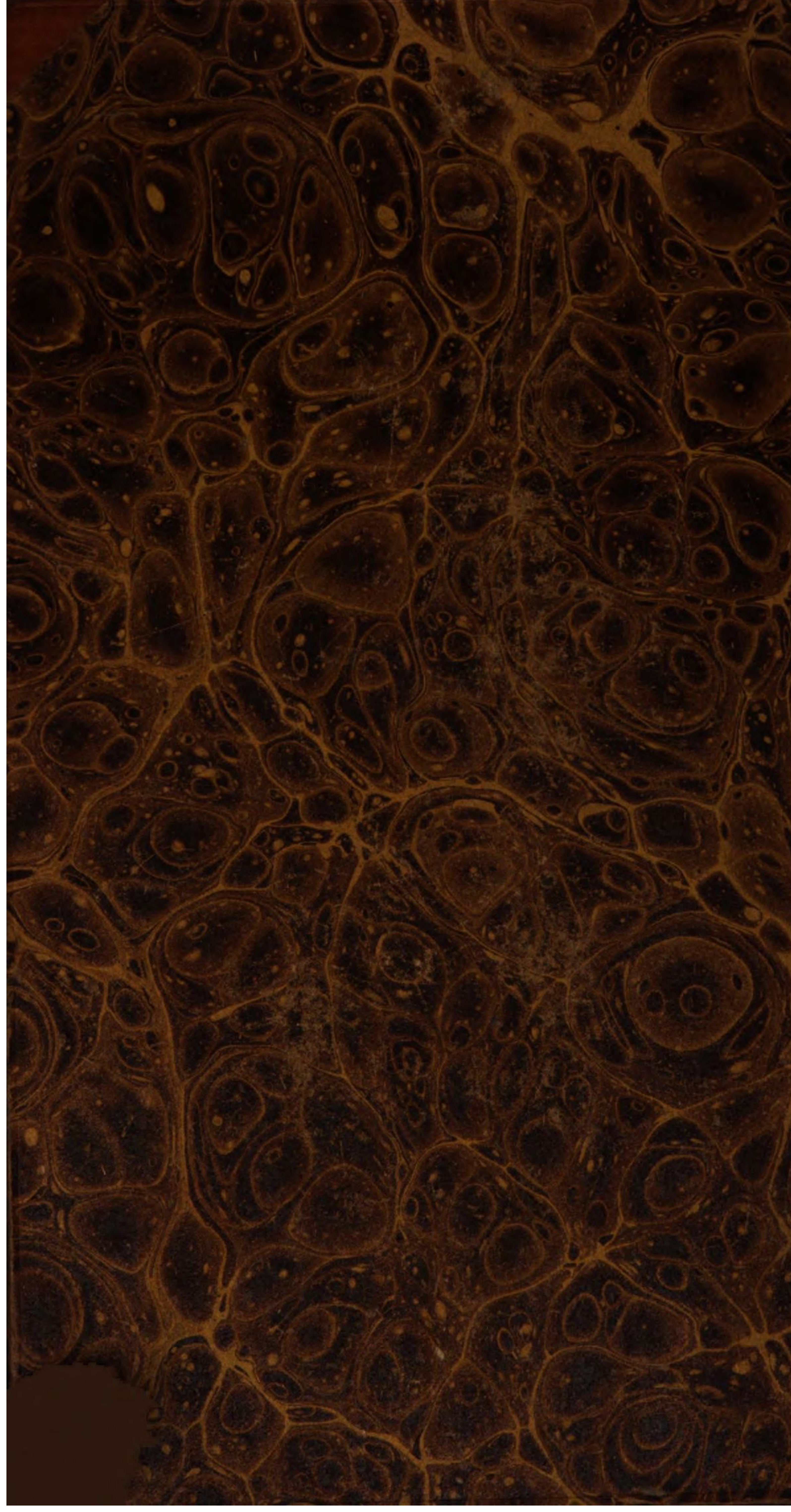
Mr. and Lady Jane Paulet are not blessed with children, but the young Marquis of Truro, who lives with them, supplies the place of any offspring of their own. He is a most engaging young man, and is said to promise considerable talent. He looks up to Mr. Paulet as his parent, having, in fact, scarcely known any other; and it would seem that Lady Jane could scarcely feel a stronger attachment for a child of her own, than she evinces toward the young lord.

Sir Matthew and Lady Sydenham have at present three children, two sons and a daughter. Their happiness still continues uninterrupted, because their love is founded in mutual esteem and sympathy of character.

THE END.



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